THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
IN TWENTY VOLUMES

JULIUS CÆSAR
HAMLET

VOLUME XV

The annotations at the foot of the page are intended to explain difficult phrases or allusions. Single words, which are no longer in common use, appear only in the glossary, which is printed in Volume XX.

The numbering of the lines follows that of the Cambridge Edition, the text of which is used in this edition.

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THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH ANNOTATIONS AND
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION
BY SIDNEY LEE

VOLUME XV

JULIUS CÆSAR

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY SIDNEY LEE
AND AN ORIGINAL FRONTISPIECE BY BERNARD PARTRIDGE

BOSTON THE JEFFERSON PRESS *NEW YORK*

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CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction to Julius Cæsar by Sidney Lee	ix
Text of the Play	1

INTRODUCTION

I

SHAKESPEARE'S play of *Julius Caesar* was not printed in his lifetime. It was published for the first time in the First Folio of 1623, where it occupies the sixth place in the third and last section of "Tragedies." In the contents or preliminary catalogue of the First Folio the piece is entitled *The Life and Death of Julius Caesar.* The text itself bears the heading *The Tragedie of Ivlivs Cæsar.*

The play is printed with great accuracy. Textual ambiguities are few, and the editors of the First Folio may fairly be credited with enjoying access either to Shakespeare's own manuscript or to a careful copy of it.

There is no external evidence to disclose the date of the piece's composition or first production. Oft-quoted pas-

sages from two contemporary poems of well-ascertained date are commonly treated as reminiscences of Shakespeare's tragedy, and as proofs that the production of *Julius Caesar* immediately preceded their composition. But on examination this testimony is seen to deserve small reliance.

A poetaster named John Weever, in a poem called *The Mirror for Martyrs*, which was first published in 1601, wrote these lines:

> "The many-headed multitude were drawne
> By Brutus' speech, that Caesar was ambitious:
> When eloquent Mark Antonie had showne
> His virtues, who but Brutus then was vicious?"

Weever is credited with echoing here a familiar phrase from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. But another conclusion is possible. Unlike Shakespeare, Plutarch handles, very briefly and with comparative tameness, the contradictory effects of Brutus's and Antony's oratory, on "the fickle and unconstant multitude," after Caesar's murder. Yet Plutarch by no means ignores the striking episode. He makes Brutus first address the populace in the Capitol in order "to win the favour of the people and to justify that they had done." Then, "very honourably attended," the leader of the conspirators is presented as speaking from the rostrum in the Forum, where the crowd "for the reverence they bare unto Brutus kept silence to hear what he would say." Subsequently, in Plutarch as in Shakespeare, Brutus gives place to Antony who harangues the mob from the same platform. Antony, according to his Greek biographer,

by skilfully "amplifying of matters, did greatly move [his hearers'] hearts and affections unto pity and compassion," with such effect that the people of Rome riotously abjured Brutus and his party. Plutarch imputes to Caesar the ambitious pursuit of the kingly crown with little less emphasis than Shakespeare. Weever's slender reference to the theme might, on a very modest estimate of his inventiveness, well echo Plutarch to the exclusion of Shakespeare. At any rate Weever's lines are an unsubstantial foundation on which to build a theory that he was echoing Shakespeare's inspiring oratory at Caesar's funeral.

Even less can be said for the like suggestion that a passage in a poem by Drayton, which was penned in 1603 within two years of the appearance of Weever's lines, attests Drayton's acquaintance at that date with Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Drayton, in 1596, brought out his *Mortimeriados*, a long epic eulogy of Roger Mortimer, the champion of the barons against Edward II. In 1603 he republished the poem under the title *The Barrons Wars*, with revisions and additions. In the expanded description of the hero's character the poet described Mortimer (for the first time in 1603) as one

> "In whome in peace th' elements all lay
> So mixt, as none could soueraignty impute . . .
> That 't seemed, when Heaven his modell first began,
> In him it showd perfection in a man."

It is suggested that Drayton adapted these lines from the elegy on Brutus in *Julius Caesar* (V, v, 73–76).

"His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that nature might stand up
And say to all the world, This was a man."

But the general notion that perfection in man springs from mixture of the elements in due proportions is clothed in very similar language by authors who wrote before either Shakespeare or Drayton. Ben Jonson, for example in *Cynthia's Revels*, which was acted and published in 1600, had written of one "in whom the humours and elements are peaceably met, without emulation of precedencie; . . . in all, so compos'd and order'd, as it is cleare, Nature went about some full work, she did more than make a man, when she made him" (Act II, Sc. iii). So many pre-existent sources for Drayton's panegyric were available that there is no ground for assuming that he sought inspiration from Shakespeare's play.

To internal evidence alone must recourse be had in order to determine the period in Shakespeare's career to which the piece belongs. Even the internal testimony is less definite than could be wished. But the firmness with which the leading characters are delineated, the care bestowed on the construction, the convincing pertinence of the thought and language, — all prove that Shakespeare's powers, when *Julius Caesar* was written, had ripened into a virility which carried them within measurable distance of their last stage of perfection. These are plain signs that the last stage had not been reached, but there is no mark of immaturity, no faltering of the firm master-hand.

The characteristics of the metre and the mode in

which prose is employed equally dissociate this Roman tragedy from Shakespeare's early and from his latest efforts. In his early work the metrical laws are obeyed more strictly, while prose usually figures more sparingly, and almost exclusively in comic or frivolous dialogue. In the latest work the metrical license is greater, while there is a more liberal supply and more varied application of prose. Throughout *Julius Caesar* the metre is freely handled, but the violent irregularities of the final stage of Shakespeare's art are absent. Prose is infrequent and is mainly employed in the less dignified incident, as in the youthful plays. But Shakespeare betrays his ageing hand by making prose the vehicle of Brutus's studied oratory in the great scene of the Forum. Thereby a masterly contrast is contrived with the verse of Antony's more incisive and more moving rhetoric in the same environment.

By all these tokens *Julius Caesar* is brought into near relation with the full development of English-history drama in *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, and with that trilogy of perfected romance *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*. The internal evidence in fact fully supports the inference that *Julius Caesar* followed at no long interval *As You Like It*, and immediately preceded the great achievement of *Hamlet*. With the hero of the latter tragedy Brutus has obvious kinship, though the habits of introspection which are put to the credit of the Roman conspirator are more subtly portrayed in the Dane. *Hamlet* marks a measure of advance on *Julius Caesar* in the sustained vivacity of characterisation, and to a smaller degree in metrical

facility. According to unquestionable external evidence, *Hamlet* was produced in 1603. *Julius Caesar* may be safely assigned to the middle period of 1601 or to the early months of 1602.

II

Julius Caesar is Shakespeare's earliest essay in the dramatisation of a genuine theme of Roman history. But there is evidence that the glory of ancient Rome had inthralled Shakespeare very early in his life. The fabulous legend of Tarquin's ravishment of Lucrece, which the genius of Livy and Ovid had vivified, was the subject of his second narrative poem. The tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*, to which in all probability he merely lent a revising pen, dealt with an imaginary episode of imperial Rome in decadence. Elsewhere in the early plays there are passing allusions to Julius Caesar, who was universally acknowledged to be the Colossus of Roman history. In *Henry VI*, Caesar's assassination is mentioned twice (*2 Hen. VI*, IV, i; *3 Hen. VI*, V, v). In *Richard III* (III, i, 84–88) the fable that Julius Caesar built the Tower of London is discussed, and an eulogy is pronounced on the hero, both as a writer and a general.

> "That Julius Caesar was a famous man:
> With what his valour did enrich his wit
> His wit set down to make his valour live.
> Death makes no conquest of this conqueror,
> For now he lives in fame, though not in life."

Twice in later plays, *2 Henry IV* and *As You Like It*, quotation is made with somewhat ironical comment of

Caesar's proud apophthegm "Veni, vidi, vici." Work which followed *Julius Caesar* betrays ample signs of Shakespeare's familiarity not only with Caesar but with many another leading name in Roman history; that circumstance, however, lacks pertinence to the present issue.

It was not until Shakespeare had acquainted himself with Plutarch's *Lives* that he realised the richness of the material which Roman history offered a dramatist, and there is no sign that Shakespeare had studied Plutarch with any minuteness before he wrote *Julius Caesar*. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* possibly betrays some knowledge of Plutarch's *Life of Theseus*. But Shakespeare makes slender use of Plutarch's work in that ethereal play of fancy. It was in *Julius Caesar* that he for the first time reared on foundations exclusively laid by the Greek biographer a dramatic study of life. It was an appropriate season in his career to make the experiment. He had recently brought to a close an impressive series of plays — tragedies for the most part — on topics of English history drawn from Holinshed's *Chronicles*. His hand was well exercised in the use of historical authorities. Passing political events like the conspiracy and fall of the Earl of Essex rendered the temper of the public responsive, too, to the mimic stir of so momentous a revolution as that which turned the Republic of Rome into the Empire. Shakespeare's first essay in the dramatisation of Roman history promised on a priori grounds the success which it achieved. It was not long suffered to stand alone. *Julius Caesar* was the first piece in a trilogy of surpassing grandeur, of

which the second and third instalments were *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*.

No depreciation of the working of Shakespeare's genius attends a frank recognition of the large debt which his Roman plays owe to Plutarch's suggestion. The Greek biographer is worthy of his disciple. It is Plutarch's glory to have placed biography in the category of the literary arts. His method may not at the first glance promise any very pregnant result. He is in essence an anecdotal gossip. He loves to accumulate microscopic particulars of men's lives, the smallest traits of character, the least apparently impressive habits. But he arranged his ample and seemingly trivial details with so magical a skill as to evolve a speaking likeness of his chosen heroes, all of whom were of dignified stature. His work made a wide and an enduring appeal, and the unlettered reader has always proved as enthusiastic an admirer of its worth as the scholar. Shakespeare's observant eye summarily detected in Plutarch's plays a stimulating source of inspiration.

Plutarch's *Lives* reached Elizabethan England through France. Very early in the history of the French Renaissance was Plutarch admitted to the first rank of the literary hierarchy. A French rendering made his *Lives* a French classic. The French translator, Jacques Amyot, born in 1513, lived on till 1593, when Shakespeare was twenty-nine. For the last twenty-three years of his life he was bishop of Auxerre, and suffered much in old age from the civil strife which waged in his diocese. His version of Plutarch's *Lives* was published at Paris in 1559. It reads like an original work, and reveals

French prose in all its grace and perspicuity. Amyot's scholarship was not impeccable and mistranslations are not infrequent. Yet Amyot's effort remains one of the most successful renderings of Greek into a modern language. "I do with some reason, as me seemeth," wrote Montaigne, "give pricke and praise unto Iaques Amiot above all our French writers, not only for his natural purity, and pure elegancie of the tongue . . . but above all, I con him thanks that he hath had the hap to chuse, and knowledge to cull-out so worthy a worke [as Plutarch's *Lives*], and a booke so fit to the purpose, therewith to make so unvaluable a present unto his countrie. We that are in the number of the ignorant had beene utterly confounded, had not his booke raised us from out the dust of ignorance. . . . It is our breviarie." Montaigne's enthusiasm for Amyot's labours echoes a sentiment universal among his countrymen and countrywomen. Madame Roland re-embodied it in her famous salutation of Plutarch's work as "le pâture des grandes âmes."

It is worthy of remembrance that the French essayist's eulogy was rendered into English by John Florio at the time that Shakespeare was engaged on *Julius Caesar*. But two decades earlier the French enthusiasm had infected England. Amyot's version of Plutarch's *Lives* was anglicised by Sir Thomas North as early as 1579, and North's rendering was at once accorded standard rank. The English translator, like Montaigne, contented himself with studying the Greek writer exclusively in his French interpreter, and Amyot's errors are all reproduced by North. But the Elizabethan version,

despite the interval that separates it from its original, conserves in ample measure the point and spirit of the Greek text. North's great folio was reprinted four times during Shakespeare's active career. All these reissues came from the press of his friend of boyhood and his earliest publisher, Richard Field, his fellow-townsman, who by the end of the sixteenth century had become a leading London "stationer." Varied influences converged to draw Shakespeare into the circle of Plutarch's admirers.

III

Many dramatists before Shakespeare had perceived the adaptability of Plutarch's *Lives* to the purposes of drama. Especially had the contrivers, as Plutarch described them, of the fall of the Roman Republic and of the rise of the Roman Empire attracted the notices of playwrights in both France and England. Round most of Plutarch's episodes in the career of Julius Caesar, French and English dramas were woven while Shakespeare was a child.

The death of Julius Caesar was the theme of two of the earliest essays in tragedy which belong to the French Renaissance. Marc-Antoine Muret, professor of the college of Guienne at Bordeaux, based on Plutarch's life of Caesar a Latin tragedy, which was acted by his students in 1544. Among this writer's academic colleagues at the time was the Scottish scholar, George Buchanan, and among his pupils who filled parts in the piece was the essayist Montaigne. Muret wholly con-

fined himself to the assassination of the Dictator. Sixteen years later Jacques Grévin, then a pupil at the college of Beauvais, wrote for presentation by his fellow-collegians a tragedy on the same topic, not in Latin, but in rhyming French verse. Grévin's play, like Muret's, is cast in the Senecan mould, with choruses of Caesar's soldiers, and long narratives in monologue, but he enlarged Muret's scope by borrowing hints from Plutarch's lives of Brutus and Mark Antony in addition to the life of Caesar. Grévin had much dramatic feeling. Calpurnia's fears and her appeal to Caesar to absent himself from the Senate on the fateful Ides of March are clothed by him in vivid language. The emotional and choleric temperament of Cassius is forcibly contrasted with the equable tenor of Brutus's disposition, and Grévin's last act presents with spirit the harangues of Brutus and Antony to the fickle mob. Grévin's tragedy acquired a wide reputation and inaugurated many traditions in the dramatic treatment of Caesar's death, which Shakespeare consciously or unconsciously developed.

Simultaneously, tragic writers of the French Renaissance, whose names enjoyed a more enduring fame than Grévin's, wrought out of Plutarch's *Lives* plays dealing with other incidents in the same period of Roman history. Jodelle produced in 1552 his tragedy of *Cleopatra*, which is often reckoned the parent of modern French tragedy. A little later, while Shakespeare was approaching manhood, an even more famous French dramatist, Robert Garnier, not only essayed anew the stirring topic of Antony and Cleopatra in the piece called *Marc Antoine*, but he adapted to the stage, in a tragedy called

Porcie, Plutarch's moving study of Brutus's brave wife Portia, while in a third tragedy called *Cornélie* (the widow of Pompey) Garnier invested with a genuinely dramatic significance such characters as Julius Caesar, Cicero, Mark Antony, Decimus Brutus, and Cassius. Cassius' speech glows throughout Garnier's drama of *Cornélie* with revolutionary ardour. Garnier's experiments in Roman tragedy are the more noteworthy in that two of them, — *Marc Antoine* and *Cornélie* — were both rendered into English, — the first by Sir Philip Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke (1594), and the second by Thomas Kyd (1595), — well before Shakespeare ventured into the Roman field.

Meanwhile at home in England, for the best part of the half-century which preceded *Julius Caesar*, the English stage had offered a home to Caesar and his friends and foes. The Roman hero has some shadowy claim, indeed, to have dignified the very birth of English tragedy. According to the contemporary diarist, Henry Machyn, a play called "Julius Caesar" was acted at Queen Elizabeth's court in February, 1562, a month after the production there of *Gorboduc*, the primordial English tragedy. But of this incident no full knowledge is accessible.

It would appear that, when Caesar first figured in English tragedy, it was in the capacity not of Dictator, but of rival and ultimate conqueror of Pompey, his early friend and ally. The sour censor of theatres, Stephen Gosson, reports that a play concerning Caesar and Pompey attracted the favour of the playgoer about 1579, in the childhood of the first theatre which was erected in

London. Fifteen years later, when the theatres of the English capital had been organised on a secure basis, the enterprising manager, Philip Henslowe, produced a second effort on the same theme, with a sequel called simply "Caesar," of which the precise subject is unrecorded. None of these early Elizabethan experiments in Roman tragedy are extant. But the Pompeian fable maintained its hold on the London stage through Shakespeare's career, and has left later memorials in print. A third English play, "Caesar and Pompey," which was produced by students of Trinity College, Oxford, in 1607, survives in a published book, and subsequently George Chapman devoted his tragic genius to a new version of the topic, which may be found among his extant works. Shakespeare's brief references in his tragedy of *Julius Caesar* to Caesar's triumph over Pompey assume, on the part of the audience, some familiarity with Pompey's story. Its frequent adaptation to stage purposes in preceding years explains the easy allusiveness.

Meanwhile workers for the Elizabethan as for the contemporary French stage anticipated Shakespeare in dramatising the final catastrophe of Caesar's great career. There was a lost Latin piece called *Caesar Interfectus* by Richard Edes whom the critic Francis Meres credited with tragic gifts. It was produced by students at Oxford in 1582 during Shakespeare's boyhood. Very early in the seventeenth century, in May, 1602, the manager Henslowe, returning once again to Caesarian topics, commissioned four Elizabethans of fertile dramatic genius, Anthony Munday, Michael Drayton, John Webster, and Thomas Middleton, to write a tragedy to

be called *Caesar's Fall.* Fate has withheld from us the text of these two experiments in Roman drama. But possibly Shakespeare had the earlier of them in mind when he made Polonius in *Hamlet* recall his rendering "at the University," of the part of Julius Caesar and his mimic murder by Brutus in the Capitol.

The dramatic stream of Caesarism was not easily checked. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, despite its artistic superiority to anything that went before or after it, is by no means the final word of the Elizabethan or Jacobean drama on the tragic theme. William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, a poetic dramatist who shared Shakespeare's predilection for Plutarchan topics, produced in 1604, quite independently of Shakespeare, a stiff Senecan play of "Julius Caesar" in English rhyme, which covered once more the ancient story of the conspiracy and its immediate issue in the flight of the conspirators. There is evidence too that the assassination was through the early years of the seventeenth century a favourite topic for travelling puppet-shows, competing for the applause of the humblest pleasure-seeker with the *Fall of Nineveh* and the *Destruction of Jerusalem.* Of this wide dissemination through the dramatic hierarchy of Caesar's tragic story Shakespeare gives a plain reminiscence in the speeches of Brutus and Cassius over his bleeding corpse (III, i, 111–114):

"Cassius. How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted o'er
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!
Brutus. How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport!"

IV

Too much of the work of Shakespeare's predecessors in Roman tragedy is lost to make it possible to define with absolute certainty its relation to his own. But while is it clear that Shakespeare was acquainted with the luxuriant Caesarian drama of older date, we may well doubt whether he owed to it aught beyond the impulse to handle the topic, a primary conception of its dramatic capacities, and a determination to challenge the rewards of its theatrical popularity. It is supererogatory to look elsewhere than in North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* for the clues which Shakespeare followed. Only in the merest trifles is there sign that he studied other sources.

From one of the lost Caesarian plays, Shakespeare may possibly have borrowed the hero's dying cry, "Et tu, Brute," which has no kind of classical authority.[1] But the phrase appears as a colloquial tag in an extant English historical play (*The True Tragedie of the Duke of Yorke*, 1595), of earlier year than Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and it may have caught the dramatist's eye there. Plutarch failed to suggest that moving touch.

The Greek biographer too is not responsible for Shakespeare's oft-repeated error of placing the scene of Caesar's assassination in the Capitol. According to Plutarch and all classical historians, that episode passed in a hall which adjoined Pompey's theatre and was

[1] See *infra*, III, i, 77, and note.

overlooked by a statue of Pompey. Polonius in *Hamlet* likewise assigns the scene of Caesar's death to the Capitol. Shakespeare may have derived the error from some preceding drama on the topic, but the misconception was a tradition in England since the time of Chaucer, who wrote in *The Monkes Tale* (713–716):

> "This Julius to the *Capitolie* wente,
> Upon a day as he was wont to go on,
> And in the *Capitolie* anon him hente
> This false Brutus and his othere foon."

Plutarch knows nothing of the Capitol in this connexion. But here Shakespeare paid tribute to a conventional error with eyes half-opened to the truth. While he misdescribes the Capitol as the meeting-place of the Senate on the fatal day, he rightly follows Plutarch in depicting Caesar's dead body as lying in the same scene at the base of Pompey's statue. That statue stood outside the region of the Capitol. The old mistake is thus given in a new and original perplexity.

All other errors in the piece are attributable to Shakespeare's study of North, — to an overscrupulous respect for North's words, even where they happen either to misread Amyot's French, or to repeat Amyot's misapprehension of the Greek. Shakespeare is perpetuating slips of North when he gives *Decimus* Brutus, Caesar's favourite and a distant cousin of the conspirator Marcus, the unauthorized prænomen of *Decius*. North, too, is responsible for Mark Antony's allocation, in the play, of the gardens which Caesar bequeathed to the people of Rome to *this* side of the Tiber, to the same

side as the Forum, where the crowded streets left no room for gardens. Plutarch had correctly placed the gardens across the river, on the opposite side to that where the Forum lay. Only one divergence from the facts of history needs any other explanation. Shakespeare, in making the triumvirs meet after Caesar's murder in Rome, instead of on an island on the river Reno near Bologna, as in Plutarch, made the alteration deliberately for the dramatic purpose of simplifying the scenic disposition of events. But such a conscious emendation of his authority stands almost alone.

It is Shakespeare's strict fidelity to Plutarch which largely distinguishes his mode of work in *Julius Caesar* from what preceded it. He takes none of those liberties with his authorities which were habitual to him when dramatising an Italian novel or even an English chronicle. He creates no new characters. He does not divert the course of events. Though his dependent method bears some resemblance to his procedure in the English-history plays, he adheres far more closely to Plutarch's text than to the text of Holinshed. He appropriates more of Plutarch's phraseology as presented by North; his verbal modifications are on the whole slighter. He economises his powers with a greater frugality. Yet his dramatic instinct never sleeps. He chooses and rejects (he does not invent) incident as suits his dramatic purpose; invariably he imports into his borrowings the unerring dramatic touch, and with a magical facility he clothes the borrowed utterance or trait of character with dramatic significance. Although he knew nothing, save what he learnt from Plutarch's pages, of such

distinctively Roman ceremonies, as the feast of the Lupercalia or of Roman funeral rites, they are reproduced in his tragedy with the fidelity of life.

One cannot measure more graphically the affluence and vivifying power of Shakespeare's dramatic power than by placing side by side a few specimens of North's phraseology with Shakespeare's adaptation of them. Plutarch's pellucid and swiftly flowing language grows pale and heavy when it is contrasted with Shakespeare's conversion of it into the vivid terms of drama.

Take for example the account of the portents preceding Caesar's murder. Shakespeare transfers Plutarch's catalogue almost literally to Casca's mouth. Plutarch's words begin thus:

"Furthermore there was a slave of the soldiers that did cast a marvellous burning flame out of his hand, insomuch that they who saw it thought he had been burnt; but when the fire was out, it was found he had no hurt."

Shakespeare's transliteration opens thus:

"A common slave (you know him well by sight),
Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn
Like twenty torches join'd; and yet his hand,
Not sensible of fire, remain'd unscorch'd."

The initial dramatic touch "you know him well by sight" at once infects the narrative with the dramatic vivacity of which Plutarch gives no trace.

Again, Shakespeare appropriates from Plutarch's pages the whole story of the omen which shakes the nerve of Cassius "being in opinion an Epicurean" on

the eve of the battle of Philippi (V, i, 80–90). Cassius speaks to this effect:

> "You know, that I held Epicurus strong,
> And his opinion: now I change my mind
> And partly credit things that do presage.
> Coming from Sardis, on our former ensign
> Two mighty eagles fell, and there they perched,
> Gorging and feeding from our soldiers' hands
> Who to Philippi here consorted us.
> This morning are they fled away, and gone,
> And in their steads, do ravens crows and kites
> Fly o'er our heads, and downward look on us
> As we were sickly prey; their shadows seem
> A canopy most fatal, under which
> Our Army lies, ready to give up the ghost."

Plutarch had put the situation thus (Vol. VI, 218–219):

> "When they raised their Camp, there came two Eagles that flying with a marvellous force, lighted upon two of the foremost Ensigns, and always followed the soldiers, which gave them meat and fed them, untill they came near to the city of Philippi; and there one day only before the battle, they both flew away. . . . and yet further there was seen a marvellous number of fowls of prey, that feed upon dead carcases: . . . The which began somewhat to alter Cassius' mind from Epicurus' opinions."

No point is lacking from Plutarch's narrative, yet it sounds coldly before Shakespeare's magic breath has lent it warmth.

Elsewhere Shakespeare's modification of Plutarch's words are more energetic, but there is no violent deviation from their tenor. Plutarch's prosaic hint of Portia's

nervous agitation after Brutus has left her for the Senate House is interpreted by Shakespeare with a peculiarly dramatic vigour. Plutarch writes:

"Portia being very careful (*i. e.* anxious) and pensive for that which was to come, and being too weak to away with so great and inward grief of mind, she could hardly keep within, but was frighted with every little noise and cry she heard, as those that are taken and possessed with the fury of the Bacchantes; asking every man that came from the market place what Brutus did, and still sent messenger after messenger to know what news."

This passage reappears in Shakespeare's play (Act II, Sc. iv) thus:

"PORTIA. I prithee, boy, run to the senate-house;
Stay not to answer me, but get thee gone;
Why dost thou stay?
LUC. To know thy errand, madam.
PORT. I would have had thee there, and here again,
Ere I can tell thee what thou should'st do there. —
. . . . . .
Art thou here yet?
LUC. Madam, what should I do?
Run to the Capitol, and nothing else?
And so return to you, and nothing else?
PORT. Yes, bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,
For he went sickly forth: and take good note
What Caesar doth, what suitors press to him.
Hark, boy! what noise is that?
LUC. I hear none, madam.
PORT. Prithee, listen well.
I hear a bustling rumour, like a fray,
And the wind brings it from the Capitol.
LUC. Sooth, madam, I hear nothing."

Perhaps the vivifying force of dramatic genius is seen to highest advantage in Shakespeare's treatment of Plutarch's suggestions for two of the most striking incidents in the story, — the great speech of Mark Antony at Caesar's funeral, and the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius. Plutarch had from his own point of view dealt adequately with both, but it remained for Shakespeare to impregnate them with dramatic feeling. The speech he sets on Antony's lips is universally regarded as the finest extant display of the orator's art. Plutarch recognised that the situation required a mighty effort on Antony's part and he reported that it was successfully made, but his faculty was unequal to the task of inventing Antony's precise language. He confined himself to describing Antony's speech thus:

"And therefore when Caesar's body was brought to the place where it should be buried, he made a funeral oration in commendation of Caesar, according to the ancient custom of praising noble men at their funerals. When he saw that the people were very glad and desirous also to hear Caesar spoken of, and his praises uttered, he mingled his oration with lamentable words; and by amplifying of matters did greatly move their hearts and affections unto pity and compassion. In fine, to conclude his oration, he unfolded before the whole assembly the bloody garments of the dead, thrust through in many places with their swords, and called the malefactors cruel and cursed murtherers. With these words he put the people into such a fury, that they presently took Caesar's body, and burnt it in the market place, with such tables and forms as they could get together."

It is unnecessary to quote Shakespeare's amplification of this passage. Nor is it needful to cite the proofs

of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Plutarch for practically every bare detail of Brutus's or Cassius' mutual recriminations. Yet as soon as Plutarch's description of the angry encounter is compared with Shakespeare's moving scene, Shakespeare's mastery of the whole gamut of dramatic expression which lies between passionate vituperation and brotherly tenderness, stands forth in an unassailable originality. Plutarch offers Shakespeare bronze for him to transmute into gold.

V

In constructing the plot of *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare was not content to draw his incident from a single life of Plutarch. He closely studied three of Plutarch's lives, those of Brutus and Mark Antony in addition to that of Caesar. In part the three memoirs cover the same ground, though Antony's memoir quickly passes beyond the chronological limits of the others. Shakespeare collated all three biographies, though for the present he concentrated chief attention on the records of Caesar and Brutus. His outlook was thereby widened. The foundations on which the dramatic edifice rests are ampler than those of any earlier play on Caesar's death, save that of Grévin. The extension of plan made more exacting demands on the writer's stagecraft.

Though Shakespeare conformed to the well-established dramatic tradition in giving Caesar's death a foremost place in the tragedy, he was ill content with the limits which previous playwrights had allotted that theme. Before Shakespeare wrote his play no one who

had dramatised the great historic episode of Caesar's assassination had carried the course of events beyond Antony's funeral oration, and the reactionary outcry of the Roman populace against the conspirators. Caesar, in the old dramatic versions, is the undisputed hero from beginning to end. Shakespeare respects Caesar's supremacy, but he invests it with the colour of paradox. The conventional dramatic action is liberally expanded. At the close of the third of his five acts, the plot has progressed no further than the popular uprising against Brutus and his colleagues, with which earlier dramatists terminated their plays. Shakespeare's fourth and fifth acts deal, by way of sequel, with episodes in Roman history subsequent to Caesar's funeral, and covering fully two and a half later years. In the closing acts Shakespeare presents in historic sequence events with which Caesar's biography has no obvious concern. We are witnesses of Antony's formation of the triumvirate, of the eastward flight of Brutus and Cassius, of their assumption of arms in Macedonia, of their pursuit by the forces of Octavianus and Antony, of the battle at Philippi, and of the suicide of the two leaders of the great conspiracy. It is not the death of Caesar on March 15, 44 B. C., which crowns Shakespeare's tragedy, but the death of Brutus in October, 42 B. C. Chronology indeed gives the second of these two tragic events an ampler setting than the first. A period of little more than a single month passes in the play before the first catastrophe is reached; a long interval of two years and seven months passes before the second catastrophe brings the piece to its end.

Thus the single interest, the unity, of the old dramatic story is seriously menaced by Shakespeare. The narrow bounds of the old action are copiously transgressed. Through more than half of Shakespeare's tragedy Caesar's ashes rest in their funeral urn. After Caesar's death Brutus, who has already challenged the prominence of the Dictator, becomes the unquestioned protagonist. Or, if Brutus's place of predominance is threatened at all, it is not by the eponymous hero of the piece, but by his fellow-conspirator, Cassius. Contrary to all established dramatic conventions, the episode of Caesar's assassination is brought into dramatic rivalry with the suicides of Brutus and Cassius.

It is the glory of Shakespeare's artistic genius thus to complicate and lengthen the threads of action without disturbing the dramatic equipoise. Inconsistencies are not altogether eliminated. But their effect is neutralised by the uniformly animated energy which fuses the links connecting the rival episodes. There is no smouldering of the dramatic fire. The vivid portrayal of Caesar's funeral is quickly followed by the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, of which Coleridge wrote that no other part of Shakespeare equally impressed him with "the belief of his genius being superhuman." Hardly anywhere else is Shakespeare's easy mastery of the art of dramatic construction seen to better advantage.

In placing so stupendous an incident as the assassination of Caesar in the middle distance, Shakespeare was challenging the perils of an anticlimax. Very subtle is the two-fold contrivance whereby he circumvented his danger. In the first place he gave a new and unprece-

dented reading of Caesar's character. He divests him of most of his heroic attributes. He does not rob him of dignity altogether, but he presents him as living somewhat precariously on a past reputation. His great personality is seen sinking into littleness under the humiliation of physical weaknesses. His decisive and resolute temper is no longer impervious to flattery and womanish vacillation. His faith in his star is decaying. His tone of authority has not vanished, but it has acquired a strain of bombast and extravagance which suggests hollowness and unreality. He is, as Cassius described him, "the tired Caesar." Though the world is still bending in awe beneath his gaze, his eye is losing its lustre, and his tongue has a trembling accent.

Plutarch notices Caesar's bodily infirmities. "Concerning the constitution of his body," the Greek biographer writes, "he was lean, white, and soft-skinned, and often subject to headache and other while to the falling sickness [*i. e.*, epilepsy]." But Plutarch merely treats such symptoms as additional proofs of his eminence, of his invincible capacity to face "all labour and hardness more than his body could bear." He burned even in his last days, according to Plutarch, "with a greedy desire of honour that set him afire and pricked him forward." Shakespeare, on the other hand, eagerly emphasises every indication of the Dictator's physical debility, veiling behind it the heroic aspect of his character. The dramatist in part forges evidence of physical weakness of which Plutarch offers no suggestion. Shakespeare, for example, invents the touch that Caesar was deaf in the left ear. Shakespeare neglects too all

the many notes that Plutarch sounds of Caesar's heroic indifference to personal comfort and impatience of effeminate luxury. No one who studied Caesar's character exclusively in Shakespeare's portrait could recognise his title to the conventional verdict of pre-eminent heroism, which a contemporary of Shakespeare phrased thus: "For his excellences, graces, and abilities, his invincible mind, his incomparable force and courage, the battles and victories which he obtained, the provinces, kings, and nations which he overcame or subdued, his counsels, stratagems, policies, and bold attempts, his magnanimity, clemency, and bounty to the conquered and conquerors, the great designs he had propounded when he was slain, being all weighed well and considered, it will plainly appear that in none of the things aforesaid, neither in many other more which may be said of him, there hath been any king or captain that excelled him, but that he in the most had excelled all others and had fewer imperfections and vices than any other." [1]

There are signs that Shakespeare's depreciatory estimate of Caesar had dawned on his mind before he took this play in hand. In *As You Like It*, V, ii, Caesar's characteristic phrase "I came, I saw, I overcame" is described as "a thrasonical brag," while Falstaff in *2 Hen. IV*, IV, iii, 40, when quoting the same words, disrespectfully assigns them to "the hook-nosed fellow of Rome." Thus, according to Shakespeare's unconventional interpretation of Caesar's personality, mental and

[1] Mexia's *Imperial History* (translated 1623).

physical failure had brought him very low before he was prostrated by the conspirators' blows. One dramatic consequence of such depreciation is clear. The shock attending the fall of a crippled veteran is slight compared with that which attaches to the overthrow of a mighty ruler in the plenitude of his prowess and confidence. The pity and terror of his tragic fate are attenuated, and a sequel to his tragedy is endurable.

A hint in Plutarch caught Shakespeare's seeing eye and offered him an effective cue. The last paragraph in Plutarch's life of Caesar opens with these words: "But his [Caesar's] great prosperity and good fortune that favoured him all his lifetime, did continue afterwards in the revenge of his death, pursuing the murtherers both by sea and land, till they had not left a man more to be executed, of all them that were actors or counsellors in the conspiracy of his death." Far earlier in the dramatist's career had he written of Julius Caesar (*Richard III*, III, i, 87):

> "Death makes no conquest of this conqueror."

The same point of view he restated towards the end of his active life, when he wrote of Caesar in *Cymbeline* (III, i, 2–4):

> ". . . whose remembrance yet
> Lives in men's eyes and will to ears and tongues
> Be theme and hearing ever."

Shakespeare's reading of history inclined him to exalt Caesar's spiritual influence after his death above his strength in life. That was the theme which he subtly contrived to make in *Julius Caesar* the motive force of

the scenes which succeed the assassination, and a new rallying point for the reader's or spectator's emotions. The Dictator's friend, Antony, at sight of the murdered corpse first strikes the needful note. He prophesies that Caesar's spirit ranging for revenge

> "With Ate by his side, come hot from hell
> Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
> Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war."

To Brutus himself in the same scene the identical sentiment presents itself, and he apostrophises the lifeless body with the words "Thou are mighty yet; thy spirit walks abroad." Finally when the armies of Rome are about to deal vengeance on Caesar's murderers, the ghost of Caesar visits Brutus's tent and gives oracular warning of the fate that awaits the arch conspirator at Philippi. Plutarch merely described the apparition in Brutus's tent on the eve of the fatal battle as Brutus's "evil spirit." Its title in the play — "The Ghost of Caesar" — is Shakespeare's invention, thereby completing the revelation of his dramatic purpose.

Thus Shakespeare deliberately amplifies Plutarch's slender suggestion of Caesar's posthumous power and invests it with a new and dramatic vigour. The fable of the drama is knit into essential unity by the double process of belittling the hero's stature in his last days of life and of magnifying the spiritual influence of his fame after death. The device savours of irony. But it justifies the treatment of Caesar's death as a temporary stopping-place in the development of the tragedy. In the result the play never lacks homogeneity nor justness of perspective.

VI

Apart from Caesar, whose presentation is deliberately streaked with paradox, the characters of the piece are so clearly defined and for the most part so consistently developed that the reader stands in small need of guidance in a study of them. On Brutus, Shakespeare has lavished all his sympathetic insight. He paints in glowing colour the perils besetting a high-souled and sensitive nature who is drawn *malgré lui* into the turmoils of a political revolution. Brutus's family traditions, which compel in him devotion to the cause of political liberty, play havoc with his life. Personally he is imbued with the love of philosophic contemplation. He delights in literature and music. A book is rarely out of his hand. He has a magnanimous faith in the virtues of mankind and recoils from evidence of their depravity. He is no man's enemy. He has a genius for friendship, and his friends include men of all classes and of all opinions. As a consequence he enjoys general respect, even veneration, and partisanship casts no slur on his good name. Therein lurks disaster.

The seeds of tragedy are sown as soon as Brutus's brother-in-law and friend, the cross-grained republican, Cassius, works on his inherited instincts of liberalism. Brutus is an old friend of Julius Caesar's. But Cassius is able to prove to Brutus's satisfaction that as long as Caesar continues in power popular rights to which Brutus's personal faith and the honour of his family are

intimately bound are in peril. Cassius has realised that any cause with which Brutus energetically identifies himself is certain of wide and enthusiastic support. Reluctantly Brutus assents to become chieftain of Caesar's political foes in obedience to what sounds like an imperative call of justice and honour. But he is too richly endowed with the milk of human kindness to fit him for leadership of a party in a stormy crisis. He cannot bring himself to countenance the desperate deeds which are requisite to the success of a revolution. With misgiving he assents to the assassination of Caesar, for his person is the embodiment of that evil principle in government which is repugnant to his inherited instinct. But he will go no further in the career of slaughter. He spares Antony, whose character he misinterprets, and he makes Antony a gift of the opportunity of rallying the Roman populace to the cause of the murdered tyrant. Meanwhile, among his followers he will tolerate no tendency to corruption or excess, and when Antony's army is at his heels, he champions the cause of purity at the risk of alienating his chief supporter. Inexperienced in the arts of war, he is hampered in his movements by the doubts and scruples of conscience which always prejudice strategy on the battlefield. He dies by his own hand, unequal to the strain of the practical endeavour to make his principles prevail against the rude odds of life.

Brutus's fellow-conspirators are cast in a rougher mould, and are on a different intellectual and spiritual plane. They present various types of the politician actively engaged in party warfare. Cassius, despite his affectionate admiration of his leader, is a stranger to his

scruples. He is above all a man of action, and though moved by an honest abhorrence of political tyranny, he lacks any punctilious sense of honour. He cherishes personal grievances against Caesar, and thinks to derive personal advantage from his fall. But he has no want of physical courage, and has the moments of tenderness incident to the courageous temperament. He frankly recognises defeat when all avenues of escape are finally closed, and his self-inflicted death does him no discredit.

Casca offers another kind of foil to Brutus. He is the only prominent character of the play whom Shakespeare has endowed with a sense of humour. At heart he is an aristocrat, with a breezy contempt for the mob. His devotion to liberal principles has no democratic colour; it is the outcome of a congenital suspicion of the fitness of any one human being to control the destinies of his fellow-men.

Of the other male characters in the play, Cicero is allotted too small a part to give him much distinction. He is ridiculed by Casca for speaking Greek, when his native language would have answered all purposes, — a shrewd hit at the great orator's love of pose. Shakespeare proves, too, that he formed instinctively a just conception of his temperament when he makes Brutus object to his enrolment among the conspirators on the ground that

> "he would never follow anything
> That other men begin."

Mark Antony is drawn in a larger scale, but without much subtlety and with some lack of consistency. A pleasure seeker and addicted to sport, he lacks moral

robustness. But there is latent in him immense energy, which is hardly distinguishable from genius, and the stirring crisis of his uncle's death calls out unsuspected power. The shock rouses him to a rare display of eloquence, and he develops instantaneously an astute capacity for affairs. He justifies his impatience of inefficiency in his weak ally Lepidus by the decisiveness of his own conduct. In spite of his selfish indulgences he shows throughout the play a strong personal affection for his benefactor Caesar, while a certain measure of magnanimity must be set to his credit in view of the eulogy he pronounces at the close of the tragedy over the dead body of Brutus.

As becomes the stern political atmosphere, the feminine interest of the tragedy is subordinated to the main action, but there is enough of it to broaden the human significance of the picture. The women characters are only two in number, Calpurnia, the wife of Caesar, and Portia, the wife of Brutus. Both are lifelike studies which set in high relief pertinent aspects of their husbands' characters. The two wives are childless, and wholly identify themselves with their husbands, by whose affairs their horizons are bounded. Calpurnia is that common type of domesticated wife who regards public questions solely as they make for the security and happiness of the home. She has superstitious fears for her husband's safety at the fateful meeting of the Senate on the Ides of March, and claims the right to detain him at home. It is immaterial to her that his public obligations and the call of public duty conflict with her bidding and wishes. Business of state lies beyond her sphere. She is of the type of

woman who, in Iago's cynical phrase, is born "to suckle fools and chronicle small beer." Her sole aim in life is to minister to Caesar's domestic comfort, and Caesar's uxorious submissiveness helps to suggest his threatening dotage.

Portia is endowed with a far richer and more expansive temperament. She is the daughter of the stoic philosopher Cato of Utica; she is "Cato's daughter, Brutus's Portia," after whom Shakespeare had long before christened admiringly Bassanio's spirited bride in *The Merchant of Venice.* Brutus's wife claims to be "stronger than her sex," "being so father'd and so husbanded." But her lofty self-opinion has not generated in her any ambition of controlling her husband. Her gentle disposition merely impels her to claim the right of sharing his innermost confidence, which his tendency to self-absorption and chivalric dread of causing her anxiety make it impossible for him to offer her. She cannot endure the thought that he has secrets from her. With characteristic sincerity she proves her powers of endurance and her fitness to bear Brutus's anxieties by wounding herself with a sword. It is abhorrent to her to be treated as a plaything, as a mere minister to conjugal pleasures. The thought of exclusion from Brutus's affairs humiliates her, not from any exaggerated faith in her sagacity, but from her conception of wifely duty, which denies the husband's right to isolate himself from her in any sphere of his life. The sense of neglect tortures her more than physical violence. When she learns of the failure of her husband's plans, knowledge of which he had deliberately withheld from her, she realizes that

life, whether with him or without him, is intolerable. Following the example which her father had set her, she puts an end to her existence by the terrible expedient of placing live coals in her mouth.

VII

Julius Caesar enjoyed for fully two centuries a prosperous career in the theatre. The great Forum scene and the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius were recognised at once to be among the most stirring theatrical episodes in the whole range of Elizabethan drama. One of Shakespeare's earliest eulogists, Leonard Digges, twice described in verse the applause which attended in the playhouse the rousing "parley" of the two conspirators. Digges' first poem was prefixed to the First Folio of 1623. In his second poetic commendation, which appeared in the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's *Poems*, Digges contrasted the coldness which numbed the audience when Ben Jonson's Roman play of *Catiline* was revived, with the frenzied acclamations which welcomed the return to the stage of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. All classes of auditor acknowledged the appeal of the tragedy in its early days of life. It is doubtless the piece called *Caesars Tragedye* which was acted at court in May, 1613, during the marriage festivities attending the union of the Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine.

At the Restoration *Julius Caesar* remained a stock piece in the repertory of the leading London company of

actors, which was then called the King's Company, and was under Thomas Killigrew's direction. Through the eighteenth century too the vogue of the piece was well maintained. In more recent years the piece has lost in England much of its theatrical popularity. The battle scenes and the dialogues between Brutus and Cassius at the close seem difficult to adapt to modern scenic conditions, and only a few of the greatest actors of the nineteenth century have been moved to devote their full energy to an interpretation of rôles so fascinating as Brutus and Mark Antony. The most eminent of the Kembles and Macready added to their reputations in the part of Brutus. Recent revivals of the piece in England have been few, and in theatrical circles it has lost much of its ancient favour. But its fascination for the student has never diminished, and in his sight the tragedy must always rank with the most stimulating efforts of Shakespeare's pen.

SIDNEY LEE.

JULIUS CÆSAR

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ[1]

JULIUS CÆSAR.

OCTAVIUS CÆSAR,
MARCUS ANTONIUS,
M. ÆMIL. LEPIDUS,
} triumvirs after the death of Julius Cæsar.

CICERO,
PUBLIUS,
POPILIUS LENA,
} senators.

MARCUS BRUTUS,
CASSIUS,
CASCA,
TREBONIUS,
LIGARIUS,
DECIUS BRUTUS,
METELLUS CIMBER,
CINNA,
} conspirators against Julius Cæsar.

FLAVIUS and MARULLUS, tribunes.

ARTEMIDORUS of Cnidos, a teacher of Rhetoric.

A Soothsayer.

CINNA, a poet. Another Poet.

LUCILIUS,
TITINIUS,
MESSALA,
Young CATO,
VOLUMNIUS,
} friends to Brutus and Cassius.

VARRO,
CLITUS,
CLAUDIUS,
STRATO,
LUCIUS,
DARDANIUS,
} servants to Brutus.

PINDARUS, servant to Cassius.

CALPURNIA, wife to Cæsar.

PORTIA, wife to Brutus.

Senators, Citizens, Guards, Attendants, &c.

SCENE: *Rome; the neighbourhood of Sardis; the neighbourhood of Philippi*

[1] This was printed for the first time, with exceptional accuracy, in the First Folio of 1623. The piece is there divided into Acts, but although at the head of the play appear the words Actus Primus, Scæna Prima, there are no scenic subdivisions. These were first supplied by Rowe in 1709, who also provided for the first time a list of the "dramatis personæ," with an indication of the "Scene."

ACT FIRST — SCENE I — ROME

A STREET

Enter FLAVIUS, MARULLUS, *and certain* Commoners

FLAVIUS

HENCE! HOME, YOU IDLE creatures, get you home:
Is this a holiday? what! know you not,
Being mechanical, you ought not walk
Upon a labouring day without the sign
Of your profession? Speak, what trade art thou?

FIRST COM. Why, sir, a carpenter.

MAR. Where is thy leather apron and thy rule?
What dost thou with thy best apparel on?
You, sir, what trade are you?

---

3 *mechanical*] of the class of mechanic or artisan. Cf. *2 Hen. VI*, I, iii, 191: "Base dunghill villain and *mechanical*."

SEC. COM. Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman, I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.

MAR. But what trade art thou? answer me directly.

SEC. COM. A trade, sir, that, I hope, I may use with a safe conscience; which is indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles.

MAR. What trade, thou knave? thou naughty knave, what trade?

SEC. COM. Nay, I beseech you, sir, be not out with me: yet, if you be out, sir, I can mend you.

MAR. What mean'st thou by that? mend me, thou saucy fellow!

SEC. COM. Why, sir, cobble you.

FLAV. Thou art a cobbler, art thou?

SEC. COM. Truly, sir, all that I live by is with the awl: I meddle with no tradesman's matters, nor women's matters, but with awl. I am indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes; when they are in great danger, I re-cover them. As proper men as ever trod upon neats-leather have gone upon my handiwork.

FLAV. But wherefore art not in thy shop to-day? Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?

SEC. COM. Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get

10 *in respect . . . workman*] as compared with an efficient, expert workman.

11 *a cobbler*] The word is used quibblingly in the sense of "botcher," clumsy worker, and Marullus does not perceive at once that a shoemaker is meant.

14 *soles*] a favourite pun on "souls." Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, IV, i, 123: "Not on thy *sole*, but on thy *soul*, harsh Jew."

16 *be not out*] do not lose your temper.

17 *out*] out at toes or heels, with broken shoe leather.

26 *neats-leather*] cow-hide or calf-skin.

myself into more work. But indeed, sir, we make holiday, to see Cæsar and to rejoice in his triumph.

MAR. Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome,
To grace in captive bonds his chariot-wheels?
You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The live-long day with patient expectation
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:
And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks
To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores?
And do you now put on your best attire?
And do you now cull out a holiday?
And do you now strew flowers in his way
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
Be gone!

46 *her*] its. With classical authors rivers were usually masculine.

47 *replication*] reverberation.

52 *Pompey's blood*] Pompey's kindred. Cæsar was celebrating his victory over Pompey's sons and their faction at the battle of Munda in Spain on March 17, B. C. 45. Pompey's eldest son, Cnæus, was slain there. For "blood" cf. *Rich. II*, I, iii, 57 (the king to Hereford), "Farewell, my *blood*."

Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That needs must light on this ingratitude.

FLAV. Go, go, good countrymen, and, for this fault,
Assemble all the poor men of your sort;
Draw them to Tiber banks and weep your tears
Into the channel, till the lowest stream
Do kiss the most exalted shores of all.

[*Exeunt all the Commoners.*

See, whether their basest metal be not moved;
They vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness.
Go you down that way towards the Capitol;
This way will I: disrobe the images,
If you do find them deck'd with ceremonies.

MAR. May we do so?
You know it is the feast of Lupercal.

FLAV. It is no matter; let no images
Be hung with Cæsar's trophies. I'll about,

60–61 *till . . . shores of all*] till the water in the river rise from extreme low-water mark to extreme high-water mark.

62 *whether*] Theobald's correction of the Folio reading *where*, which was the ordinary pronunciation of "whether."

66 *ceremonies*] festival ornaments, which at line 70, *infra*, are described as "trophies," and at I, ii, 284 more specifically as "scarfs." Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, V, i, 206: "the thing held as a *ceremony*" (*i. e.*, ornament).

68 *the feast of Lupercal*] the Lupercalia, a very ancient festival of purification annually celebrated at Rome in February. It was part of the ritual for the priests of the old Italian shepherd-god Lupercus, who were drawn from the great Roman families or "gentes," to run through the city scantily clad in goatskin, and strike with leather thongs women who stood in the runners' way in the belief that their blows would cure sterility. Cf. I, ii, 8, *infra:* "this holy *chase.*"

And drive away the vulgar from the streets:
So do you too, where you perceive them thick.
These growing feathers pluck'd from Cæsar's wing
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,
Who else would soar above the view of men
And keep us all in servile fearfulness. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — A PUBLIC PLACE

Flourish. Enter CÆSAR; ANTONY, *for the course;* CALPURNIA, PORTIA, DECIUS, CICERO, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, *and* CASCA; *a great crowd following, among them a* Soothsayer

CÆS. Calpurnia!

CASCA. Peace, ho! Cæsar speaks.

[*Music ceases.*

CÆS. Calpurnia!

CAL. Here, my lord.

CÆS. Stand you directly in Antonius' way,
When he doth run his course. Antonius!

ANT. Cæsar, my lord?

CÆS. Forget not, in your speed, Antonius,
To touch Calpurnia; for our elders say,

---

74 *pitch*] a common term in falconry, for the highest stage of the falcon's flight. Cf. *1 Hen. VI*, II, iv, 11: "Between two hawks, which flies the higher *pitch?*"

1 (stage direction) *for the course*] as a priest of Lupercus, equipped for running at the feast of the Lupercalia. Cf. I, i, 68, *supra.*

(stage direction) DECIUS] This person is so called in error by North (following the French version) in his translation of Plutarch; he was really named Decimus. His surname of Brutus indicates a distant relationship with Marcus Brutus. Cf. I, iii, 148, and II, i, 95, *infra.*

3 *Antonius*] The Folios only recognise the two forms of the name, *Antony* and *Antonio.* For the latter Pope substituted *Antonius* throughout.

The barren, touched in this holy chase,
Shake off their sterile curse.
ANT. I shall remember:
When Cæsar says "do this," it is perform'd.
CÆS. Set on, and leave no ceremony out. [*Flourish.*
SOOTH. Cæsar!
CÆS. Ha! who calls?
CASCA. Bid every noise be still: peace yet again!
CÆS. Who is it in the press that calls on me?
I hear a tongue, shriller than all the music,
Cry "Cæsar." Speak; Cæsar is turn'd to hear.
SOOTH. Beware the ides of March.
CÆS. What man is that?
BRU. A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.
CÆS. Set him before me; let me see his face.
CAS. Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Cæsar.
CÆS. What say'st thou to me now? speak once again.
SOOTH. Beware the ides of March.
CÆS. He is a dreamer; let us leave him: pass.
[*Sennet. Exeunt all but Brutus and Cassius.*
CAS. Will you go see the order of the course?
BRU. Not I.

---

8 *this holy chase*] See note on I, i, 68, *supra.*

11 *Set on*] Proceed.

15 *press*] crowd.

18 *the ides of March*] In the Roman calendar the midmost period of the month was termed the Ides, which fell in March, May, July, October on the 15th day, and in other months on the 13th day.

24 *a dreamer*] a visionary.

(stage direction) [*Sennet*] Notes on a trumpet or cornet, which sounded the entry or exit of a procession.

CAS. I pray you, do.
BRU. I am not gamesome: I do lack some part
Of that quick spirit that is in Antony.
Let me not hinder, Cassius, your desires;
I'll leave you.
CAS. Brutus, I do observe you now of late:
I have not from your eyes that gentleness
And show of love as I was wont to have:
You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand
Over your friend that loves you.
BRU. Cassius,
Be not deceived: if I have veil'd my look,
I turn the trouble of my countenance
Merely upon myself. Vexed I am
Of late with passions of some difference,
Conceptions only proper to myself,
Which give some soil perhaps to my behaviours;
But let not therefore my good friends be grieved —
Among which number, Cassius, be you one —
Nor construe any further my neglect
Than that poor Brutus with himself at war
Forgets the shows of love to other men.

28 *gamesome*] sportive.
29 *quick spirit*] high spirit, liveliness.
35–36 *You bear . . . a hand Over*] You show too harsh and unfriendly a demeanour towards. The metaphor is from a horseman's domineering treatment of his steed. Cf. line 312, *infra*.
39 *Merely*] Entirely.
40 *passions of some difference*] conflicting passions or emotions, *i. e.*, his personal regard for Cæsar and his hatred of Cæsar's political ambition.
42 *Which . . . behaviours*] Which somewhat blemish or spoil my manners.

CAS. Then, Brutus, I have much mistook your passion;
By means whereof this breast of mine hath buried
Thoughts of great value, worthy cogitations.
Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?
BRU. No, Cassius; for the eye sees not itself
But by reflection, by some other things.
CAS. 'T is just:
And it is very much lamented, Brutus,
That you have no such mirrors as will turn
Your hidden worthiness into your eye,
That you might see your shadow. I have heard
Where many of the best respect in Rome,
Except immortal Cæsar, speaking of Brutus,
And groaning underneath this age's yoke,
Have wish'd that noble Brutus had his eyes.
BRU. Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,
That you would have me seek into myself
For that which is not in me?
CAS. Therefore, good Brutus, be prepared to hear:
And since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I your glass
Will modestly discover to yourself
That of yourself which you yet know not of.

48 *passion*] sentiment.

49 *By means whereof*] In consequence of which misapprehension. The antecedent of *whereof* is the whole sentence *Then Brutus . . . passion* of the preceding line.

53 *But by reflection . . . things*] Only by being reflected in something else, *i. e.*, in the image reflected by mirrors or any polished surface.

58 *shadow*] image.

And be not jealous on me, gentle Brutus:
Were I a common laugher, or did use
To stale with ordinary oaths my love
To every new protester; if you know
That I do fawn on men and hug them hard,
And after scandal them; or if you know
That I profess myself in banqueting
To all the rout, then hold me dangerous.
[*Flourish and shout.*
BRU. What means this shouting? I do fear, the people
Choose Cæsar for their king.
CAS. Ay, do you fear it? 80
Then must I think you would not have it so.
BRU. I would not, Cassius, yet I love him well.
But wherefore do you hold me here so long?
What is it that you would impart to me?
If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honour in one eye and death i' the other,
And I will look on both indifferently:
For let the gods so speed me as I love
The name of honour more than I fear death.

---

71 *jealous on*] suspicious of.
72 *laugher*] Rowe's correction of the Folio reading *Laughter*, which might mean "laughing-stock."
73 *To stale*] To vulgarise, make stale.
76 *scandal*] slander.
77 *profess myself*] make professions of friendship.
83 *hold*] detain.
87 *indifferently*] with impartiality, as things of the same calibre.
88 *speed me*] prosper me.

CAS. I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,
As well as I do know your outward favour.
Well, honour is the subject of my story.
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life, but, for my single self,
I had as lief not be as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.
I was born free as Cæsar; so were you:
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he:
For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
Cæsar said to me "Darest thou, Cassius, now
Leap in with me into this angry flood,
And swim to yonder point?" Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in
And bade him follow: so indeed he did.
The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy;
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
Cæsar cried "Help me, Cassius, or I sink!"
I, as Æneas our great ancestor
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Cæsar: and this man
Is now become a god, and Cassius is

91 *outward favour*] external features, countenance.

109 *hearts of controversy*] hearts bent on contest (with the force of the tide).

112–114 *I, as Æneas . . . bear*] Cf. *2 Hen. VI*, V, ii, 62–63: "As did Æneas old Anchises bear, So bear I thee upon my manly shoulders."

A wretched creature, and must bend his body
If Cæsar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake: 't is true, this god did shake;
His coward lips did from their colour fly,
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his lustre: I did hear him groan:
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried, "Give me some drink, Titinius,"
As a sick girl. Ye gods! it doth amaze me
A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world
And bear the palm alone. [*Shout. Flourish.*

BRU. Another general shout!
I do believe that these applauses are
For some new honours that are heap'd on Cæsar.

CAS. Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about

122 *His coward lips . . . fly*] The forced figure is that of a cowardly soldier running away from his colours or flag.

123 *bend*] glance.

129 *temper*] temperament, constitution.

130 *get the start of*] outstrip, attain first place in.

136 *Like a Colossus*] The Colossus was a bronze statue of a man, one hundred and twenty feet high, whose legs were so fixed in the harbour of Rhodes that ships sailed between them. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, V, i, 123: "Nothing but a *colossus* can do thee that friendship," Prince Henry's reply to Falstaff's request that the prince should bestride him if he fall in the battle.

To find ourselves dishonourable graves.
Men at some time are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
Brutus, and Cæsar: what should be in that Cæsar?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,
Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Cæsar.
Now, in the names of all the gods at once,
Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed,
That he is grown so great? Age, thou art shamed!
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
When went there by an age, since the great flood,
But it was famed with more than with one man?
When could they say till now that talk'd of Rome
That her wide walls encompass'd but one man?
Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough,
When there is in it but one only man.
O, you and I have heard our fathers say

141 *underlings*] inferior beings.

151 *bloods*] spirits, hearts.

152 *the great flood*] a reference to the great flood of classical mythology, in which Deucalion filled the part of the Biblical Noah. Deucalion is mentioned by name in *Cor.*, II, i, 85.

153 *famed with*] made famous by.

155 *wide walls*] Rowe's emendation of the Folio reading *wide walks*, which has been explained as "spacious bounds."

156 *Rome . . . room*] "Rome" was commonly pronounced like "room." Cf. III, i, 290, *infra*: "no *Rome* of safety."

There was a Brutus once that would have brook'd
The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
As easily as a king.

BRU. That you do love me, I am nothing jealous;
What you would work me to, I have some aim:
How I have thought of this and of these times,
I shall recount hereafter; for this present,
I would not, so with love I might entreat you,
Be any further moved. What you have said
I will consider; what you have to say
I will with patience hear, and find a time
Both meet to hear and answer such high things.
Till then, my noble friend, chew upon this:
Brutus had rather be a villager
Than to repute himself a son of Rome
Under these hard conditions as this time
Is like to lay upon us.

CAS. I am glad that my weak words
Have struck but this much show of fire from Brutus.

BRU. The games are done, and Cæsar is returning.

CAS. As they pass by, pluck Casca by the sleeve;

---

159 *There was a Brutus once*] Lucius Junius Brutus, the legendary founder of the Roman republic, 509 B. C., who sentenced to death his own sons for conspiring to restore the monarchy.

160 *eternal*] commonly used to express abhorrence in the same manner as "infernal." Cf. *Othello*, IV, ii, 131: "*eternal* villain."

163 *What . . . some aim*] What you would induce me to do, I can give some guess.

171 *chew*] reflect. Cf. *As you like it*, IV, iii, 100: "*chewing the food* of sweet and bitter fancy."

And he will, after his sour fashion, tell you
What hath proceeded worthy note to-day.

Re-enter CÆSAR *and his Train*

BRU. I will do so: but, look you, Cassius,
The angry spot doth glow on Cæsar's brow,
And all the rest look like a chidden train:
Calpurnia's cheek is pale, and Cicero
Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes
As we have seen him in the Capitol,
Being cross'd in conference by some senators.

CAS. Casca will tell us what the matter is.

CÆS. Antonius!

ANT. Cæsar?

CÆS. Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights:
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

ANT. Fear him not, Cæsar; he 's not dangerous;
He is a noble Roman, and well given.

CÆS. Would he were fatter! but I fear him not:
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men: he loves no plays,

184 *a chidden train*] a retinue of attendants who have been scolded.

192–195 *Let me have . . . dangerous*] Here Shakespeare closely develops hints given by North's rendering of Plutarch. *Sleek-headed* is Shakespeare's paraphrase of North's "smooth combed."

197 *well given*] well disposed.

As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music:
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear; for always I am Cæsar.
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him.

[*Sennet. Exeunt Cæsar and all his Train but Casca.*

CASCA. You pull'd me by the cloak; would you speak with me?

BRU. Ay, Casca; tell us what hath chanced to-day, That Cæsar looks so sad.

CASCA. Why, you were with him, were you not?

BRU. I should not then ask Casca what had chanced.

CASCA. Why, there was a crown offered him: and being offered him, he put it by with the back of his hand, thus: and then the people fell a-shouting.

BRU. What was the second noise for?

CASCA. Why, for that too.

CAS. They shouted thrice: what was the last cry for?

CASCA. Why, for that too.

BRU. Was the crown offered him thrice?

CASCA. Ay, marry, was 't, and he put it by thrice,

213 *this ear is deaf*] a touch of Shakespeare's invention.

217 *sad*] serious.

227 *Was the crown . . . thrice*] According to North, the offer of the crown was only made *twice*.

every time gentler than other; and at every putting by mine honest neighbours shouted.

CAS. Who offered him the crown?

CASCA. Why, Antony.

BRU. Tell us the manner of it, gentle Casca.

CASCA. I can as well be hang'd as tell the manner of it: it was mere foolery; I did not mark it. I saw Mark Antony offer him a crown: yet 't was not a crown neither, 't was one of these coronets: and, as I told you, he put it by once: but for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it. Then he offered it to him again; then he put it by again: but, to my thinking, he was very loath to lay his fingers off it. And then he offered it the third time; he put it the third time by: and still as he refused it, the rabblement hooted and clapped their chopped hands and threw up their sweaty night-caps and uttered such a deal of stinking breath because Cæsar refused the crown, that it had almost choked Cæsar; for he swounded and fell down at it: and for mine own part, I durst not laugh, for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air.

CAS. But, soft, I pray you: what, did Cæsar swound?

CASCA. He fell down in the market-place and foamed at mouth and was speechless.

---

243 *hooted*] The first three Folios read *howted;* the Fourth Folio reads *houted.* Hanmer substituted *shouted.* "Hooted," in its ordinary sense of disapproval, fits the context. Cf. line 258, *infra*, where the people is said to have both clapped Cæsar and hissed him with equal readiness.

244 *chopped*] chapped, disfigured with wrinkles.

247 *swounded*] The Folios read *swoonded*, for which Rowe substituted *swooned.* "Swounded" was the common Elizabethan usage.

BRU. 'T is very like: he hath the falling-sickness.

CAS. No, Cæsar hath it not: but you, and I,
And honest Casca, we have the falling-sickness.

CASCA. I know not what you mean by that, but I am sure Cæsar fell down. If the tag-rag people did not clap him and hiss him according as he pleased and displeased them, as they use to do the players in the theatre, I am no true man.

BRU. What said he when he came unto himself?

CASCA. Marry, before he fell down, when he perceived the common herd was glad he refused the crown, he plucked me ope his doublet and offered them his throat to cut. An I had been a man of any occupation, if I would not have taken him at a word, I would I might go to hell among the rogues. And so he fell. When he came to himself again, he said, if he had done or said any thing amiss, he desired their worships to think it was his infirmity. Three or four wenches, where I stood, cried "Alas, good soul!" and forgave him with all their hearts: but there's no heed to be taken of them; if Cæsar had stabbed their mothers, they would have done no less.

BRU. And after that, he came, thus sad, away?

CASCA. Ay.

CAS. Did Cicero say any thing?

CASCA. Ay, he spoke Greek.

---

253 *the falling-sickness*] a colloquial name for "epilepsy."
255 *the tag-rag people*] the riffraff.
259 *use to do*] are in the habit of clapping and hissing.
264 *he plucked me ope*] "me" is the ethic dative.
265 *a man of any occupation*] a workman, an artisan.

CAS. To what effect?

CASCA. Nay, an I tell you that, I'll ne'er look you i' the face again: but those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads; but for mine own part, it was Greek to me. I could tell you more news too: Marullus and Flavius, for pulling scarfs off Cæsar's images, are put to silence. Fare you well. There was more foolery yet, if I could remember it.

CAS. Will you sup with me to-night, Casca?

CASCA. No, I am promised forth.

CAS. Will you dine with me to-morrow?

CASCA. Ay, if I be alive, and your mind hold, and your dinner worth the eating.

CAS. Good; I will expect you.

CASCA. Do so: farewell, both. [*Exit.*

BRU. What a blunt fellow is this grown to be!
He was quick mettle when he went to school.

CAS. So is he now in execution
Of any bold or noble enterprise,
However he puts on this tardy form.
This rudeness is a sauce to his good wit,
Which gives men stomach to digest his words
With better appetite.

BRU. And so it is. For this time I will leave you:
To-morrow, if you please to speak with me,
I will come home to you, or, if you will,
Come home to me and I will wait for you.

284–285 *pulling scarfs . . . images*] Cf. I, i, 65, 66, and note.
285 *put to silence*] reproved.
288 *promised forth*] already engaged.
290 *and your mind hold*] and you still wish me to come.

CAS. I will do so: till then, think of the world.
[*Exit Brutus.*

Well, Brutus, thus art noble; yet, I see,
Thy honourable metal may be wrought
From that it is disposed: therefore it is meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
For who so firm that cannot be seduced?
Cæsar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus:
If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
He should not humour me. I will this night,
In several hands, in at his windows throw,
As if they came from several citizens,
Writings, all tending to the great opinion
That Rome holds of his name, wherein obscurely
Cæsar's ambition shall be glanced at:
And after this let Cæsar seat him sure;
For we will shake him, or worse days endure. [*Exit.*

309 *From that it is disposed*] From its natural disposition. "Disposed" is here equivalent to "disposed to."

312 *bear me hard*] has a grudge against me; uses me harshly; a figure from a cruel rider who carries a tight rein. Cf. the Latin "ægre ferre." See line 35, *supra*, and II, i, 215, *infra*.

314 *He should not humour me*] Commentators differ as to whether *He* refers to Brutus or to Cæsar. Some think Cassius means "(If Brutus and I changed places) Brutus should not work on me (as I am working on him)," in view of Cæsar's love of Brutus. But there seems more point in the interpretation: "If Brutus and I were to change places, Cæsar, despite his affection for me, should not cajole me (into forgetting my principles)." In the lines that follow, Cassius plainly says that he is taking measures to counteract Cæsar's influence over Brutus.

315 *hands*] handwritings.

319 *glanced at*] hit at, censured.

SCENE III — A STREET

Thunder and lightning. Enter, from opposite sides, CASCA, *with his sword drawn, and* CICERO

CIC. Good even, Casca: brought you Cæsar home?
Why are you breathless? and why stare you so?
CASCA. Are you not moved, when all the sway of earth
Shakes like a thing unfirm? O Cicero,
I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds
Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen
The ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam,
To be exalted with the threatening clouds;
But never till to-night, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
Or else the world too saucy with the gods
Incenses them to send destruction.
CIC. Why, saw you any thing more wonderful?
CASCA. A common slave — you know him well by sight —
Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn
Like twenty torches join'd, and yet his hand
Not sensible of fire remain'd unscorch'd.

1 *brought you Cæsar home?*] did you escort Cæsar home?
3 *all the sway of earth*] the whole constitution of the earth, its steady balance or poise.
8 *To be exalted*] So as to be exalted.

Besides — I ha' not since put up my sword —
Against the Capitol I met a lion,
Who glazed upon me and went surly by
Without annoying me: and there were drawn
Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women
Transformed with their fear, who swore they saw
Men all in fire walk up and down the streets.
And yesterday the bird of night did sit
Even at noon-day upon the market-place,
Hooting and shrieking. When these prodigies
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say
"These are their reasons: they are natural:"
For, I believe, they are portentous things
Unto the climate that they point upon.

CIC. Indeed, it is a strange-disposed time:
But men may construe things after their fashion,
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.
Comes Cæsar to the Capitol to-morrow?

CASCA. He doth; for he did bid Antonius
Send word to you he would be there to-morrow.

CIC. Good night then, Casca: this disturbed sky
Is not to walk in.

CASCA. Farewell, Cicero. [*Exit Cicero.*

21 *glazed*] stared or glared; still used in dialects. Cf. Peele's *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* (Scene xxii, l. 295): "that *glazing* star," and Lyly's *Euphues* (ed. Arber, p. 91, l. 12): "the *glaze*-worme (*i. e.*, glow-worm), which shineth most bright in the darke." Rowe needlessly substituted *glar'd* for *glazed.*

22–23 *drawn Upon a heap*] collected into a crowd or mob.

26 *the bird of night*] the owl.

32 *climate*] clime, region.

Enter CASSIUS

CAS. Who's there?
CASCA. A Roman.
CAS. Casca, by your voice.
CASCA. Your ear is good. Cassius, what night is this!
CAS. A very pleasing night to honest men.
CASCA. Who ever knew the heavens menace so?
CAS. Those that have known the earth so full of faults.
For my part, I have walk'd about the streets,
Submitting me unto the perilous night,
And thus unbraced, Casca, as you see,
Have bared my bosom to the thunder-stone;
And when the cross blue lightning seem'd to open
The breast of heaven, I did present myself
Even in the aim and very flash of it.
CASCA. But wherefore did you so much tempt the heavens?
It is the part of men to fear and tremble
When the most mighty gods by tokens send
Such dreadful heralds to astonish us.
CAS. You are dull, Casca, and those sparks of life
That should be in a Roman you do want,
Or else you use not. You look pale and gaze

48 *unbraced*] with doublet unbuttoned. Cf. II, i, 262, *infra*.
49 *the thunder-stone*] the thunderbolt, which was supposed to fall with each flash of lightning. Cf. *Othello*, V, ii, 237–238: "Are there no *stones* in heaven But what serve for the *thunder?*"
50 *cross*] forked, zigzag.

And put on fear and cast yourself in wonder,
To see the strange impatience of the heavens:
But if you would consider the true cause
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,
Why birds and beasts from quality and kind,
Why old men fool and children calculate,
Why all these things change from their ordinance,
Their natures and preformed faculties,
To monstrous quality, why, you shall find
That heaven hath infused them with these spirits
To make them instruments of fear and warning
Unto some monstrous state.
Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
Most like this dreadful night,
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
As doth the lion in the Capitol,
A man no mightier than thyself or me

60 *cast yourself in wonder*] fling yourself into a state of wonder. Many editors substitute *case* (*i. e.*, clothe) for *cast*, quoting *Much Ado*, IV, i, 144: "I am so *attired in wonder*." But no change is necessary.

64 *from quality and kind*] contrary to their vocation (or disposition) and nature. For "quality" cf. line 68, *infra*.

65 *Why old men . . . calculate*] *Fool* (*i. e.*, play the fool) is Mitford's correction of the Folio reading *fools*, which might of course be an example of the no uncommon construction of a verb in the singular with a plural subject. It is probable, however, that by "old men" Shakespeare intended persons not of veteran experience, but of mental senility, of senile idiocy and that "fools" and "children" are homologous subjects of the verb "calculate." "Calculate" means "foretell," "show prophetic wisdom."

66 *ordinance*] ordained, appointed character.

67 *preformed faculties*] faculties with which they were originally endowed.

71 *Unto some monstrous state*] Respecting some abnormal condition of things.

In personal action, yet prodigious grown
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.

CASCA. 'T is Cæsar that you mean; is it not, Cassius?

CAS. Let it be who it is: for Romans now
Have thews and limbs like to their ancestors;
But, woe the while! our fathers' minds are dead,
And we are govern'd with our mothers' spirits;
Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish.

CASCA. Indeed they say the senators to-morrow
Mean to establish Cæsar as a king;
And he shall wear his crown by sea and land,
In every place save here in Italy.

CAS. I know where I will wear this dagger then:
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius.
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat:
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,
Never lacks power to dismiss itself.
If I know this, know all the world besides,
That part of tyranny that I do bear
I can shake off at pleasure. [*Thunder still.*

CASCA. So can I:

77–78 *prodigious grown And fearful*] grown into a prodigy or portent and causing fear.

91 *Therein*] In the power of suicide. Cf. *infra*, V, i, 96 *seq.*

95 *Can be retentive . . . spirit*] Can hold in or repress the strength of man's spirit.

So every bondman in his own hand bears
The power to cancel his captivity.
CAS. And why should Cæsar be a tyrant then?
Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:
He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.
Those that with haste will make a mighty fire
Begin it with weak straws: what trash is Rome,
What rubbish and what offal, when it serves
For the base matter to illuminate
So vile a thing as Cæsar! But, O grief,
Where hast thou led me? I perhaps speak this
Before a willing bondman; then I know
My answer must be made. But I am arm'd,
And dangers are to me indifferent.
CASCA. You speak to Casca, and to such a man
That is no fleering tell-tale. Hold, my hand:
Be factious for redress of all these griefs,
And I will set this foot of mine as far
As who goes farthest.
CAS. There's a bargain made.
Now know you, Casca, I have moved already
Some certain of the noblest-minded Romans

101–102 *bondman . . . cancel*] There is an obvious quibble on bondman in the double sense of a slave (*i. e.*, a man in bonds or fetters), and a man who is subject to a bond or legal obligation.

114 *My answer must be made*] I must answer (to Cæsar) for my outspokenness.

117 *fleering*] grinning fawningly.

118 *Be factious for redress*] Form a party or faction for redress. There seems small ground for Johnson's interpretation of "factious" as "active."

To undergo with me an enterprise
Of honourable-dangerous consequence;
And I do know, by this they stay for me
In Pompey's porch: for now, this fearful night,
There is no stir or walking in the streets,
And the complexion of the element
In favour's like the work we have in hand,
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible.

Enter CINNA

CASCA. Stand close awhile, for here comes one in haste.
CAS. 'T is Cinna; I do know him by his gait;
He is a friend. Cinna, where haste you so?
CIN. To find out you. Who's that? Metellus Cimber?
CAS. No, it is Casca; one incorporate
To our attempts. Am I not stay'd for, Cinna?
CIN. I am glad on't. What a fearful night is this!
There's two or three of us have seen strange sights.
CAS. Am I not stay'd for? tell me.
CIN. Yes, you are.
O Cassius, if you could
But win the noble Brutus to our party —
CAS. Be you content: good Cinna, take this paper,

126 *Pompey's porch*] A spacious portico outside the theatre built by Pompey in the Campus Martius. In a chamber or "curia" attached to the theatre, the senate occasionally met, and it was at a meeting of the senate there that, according to Plutarch, Cæsar was assassinated. Cf. line 152, *infra*. Shakespeare transfers the scene of Cæsar's death to the Capitol. See III, i, 12 and 116, *infra*.

129 *In favour's like*] Resembles in face or feature. This is Johnson's correction of the Folio reading *Is favours, like.*

131 *Stand close*] Keep concealed.

And look you lay it in the prætor's chair,
Where Brutus may but find it, and throw this
In at his window; set this up with wax
Upon old Brutus' statue: all this done,
Repair to Pompey's porch, where you shall find us.
Is Decius Brutus and Trebonius there?
CIN. All but Metellus Cimber; and he's gone
To seek you at your house. Well, I will hie,
And so bestow these papers as you bade me.
CAS. That done, repair to Pompey's theatre.
[*Exit Cinna.*
Come, Casca, you and I will yet ere day
See Brutus at his house: three parts of him
Is ours already, and the man entire
Upon the next encounter yields him ours.
CASCA. O, he sits high in all the people's hearts;
And that which would appear offence in us
His countenance, like richest alchemy,
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.
CAS. Him and his worth and our great need of him
You have right well conceited. Let us go,
For it is after midnight, and ere day
We will awake him and be sure of him. [*Exeunt.*

144 *Where Brutus . . . find it*] Where only Brutus, none but he, may find it.

146 *old Brutus' statue*] the statue of Lucius Junius Brutus. Cf. I, ii, 158, *supra.*

148 *Decius*] See note on I, ii, 1 (stage direction).

152 *Pompey's theatre*] Cf. line 126, *supra.*

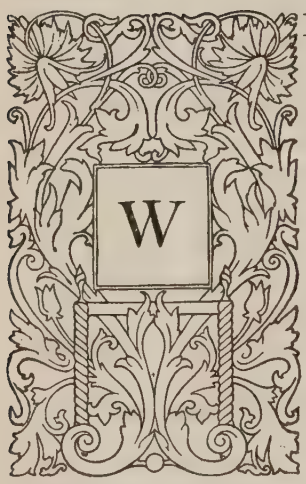
162 *conceited*] conceived, imagined.

ACT SECOND — SCENE I — ROME

BRUTUS'S ORCHARD

Enter BRUTUS

BRUTUS



HAT, LUCIUS, HO!
I cannot, by the progress of the stars,
Give guess how near to day. Lucius, I say!
I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly.
When, Lucius, when? awake, I say! what, Lucius!

Enter LUCIUS

LUC. Call'd you, my lord?

BRU. Get me a taper in my study, Lucius:
When it is lighted, come and call me here.

LUC. I will, my lord. [*Exit.*

BRU. It must be by his death: and, for my part,

5 *When . . . when?*] a common interjection of impatience.

I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd:
How that might change his nature, there's the question:
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder;
And that craves wary walking. Crown him?—that;—
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,
That at his will he may do danger with.
The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of Cæsar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 't is a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend: so Cæsar may;
Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus; that what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities:

12 *for the general*] in the interest of the public at large. Cf. *Hamlet*, II, ii, 430–431: "caviare to *the general*."

15 *that;* —] elliptical for "Let us assume that much."

19 *Remorse*] Conscientious consideration for others.

20–21 *his affections sway'd More*] his passions or feelings had greater influence.

21 *proof*] fact, experience.

28–29 *since the quarrel . . . he is*] since there is no possible pretext for quarrelling with Cæsar on the ground of anything he is by nature (or has yet done). Cf. *2 Hen. VI*, III, i, 236: "But yet we want a *colour* for his death."

And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which hatch'd would as his kind grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

Re-enter LUCIUS

LUC. The taper burneth in your closet, sir.
Searching the window for a flint I found
This paper thus seal'd up, and I am sure
It did not lie there when I went to bed.

[*Gives him the letter.*

BRU. Get you to bed again; it is not day.
Is not to-morrow, boy, the ides of March?
LUC. I know not, sir.
BRU. Look in the calendar and bring me word.
LUC. I will, sir. [*Exit.*
BRU. The exhalations whizzing in the air
Give so much light that I may read by them.

[*Opens the letter and reads.*

"Brutus, thou sleep'st: awake and see thyself.
Shall Rome, &c. Speak, strike, redress.
Brutus, thou sleep'st: awake."

Such instigations have been often dropp'd
Where I have took them up.
"Shall Rome, &c." Thus must I piece it out:
Shall Rome stand under one man's awe? What, Rome?

40 *ides*] Theobald's emendation of the Folio reading *first*. Brutus obviously has in mind the soothsayer's warning about "the *ides* of March," I, ii, 18 *seq.*, *supra*. Shakespeare probably wrote *first*, because Plutarch in one passage mentions that day as having been originally fixed for the meeting of the senate.

44 *exhalations*] meteors. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, II, iv, 310–311: "do you see these *meteors?* do you behold these *exhalations?*"

My ancestors did from the streets of Rome
The Tarquin drive, when he was call'd a king.
"Speak, strike, redress." Am I entreated
To speak and strike? O Rome, I make thee promise,
If the redress will follow, thou receivest
Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus!

Re-enter LUCIUS

LUC. Sir, March is wasted fifteen days.

[*Knocking within.*

BRU. 'T is good. Go to the gate; somebody knocks.

[*Exit Lucius.*

Since Cassius first did whet me against Cæsar
I have not slept.
Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream:
The Genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council, and the state of man,

59 *fifteen days*] Thus the Folios. The context shows that it was the evening of the day before the fifteenth.

64 *motion*] impulse, prompting.

65 *phantasma*] phantom of the imagination, nightmare.

66 *The Genius . . . instruments*] The immortal soul or spirit of a man which suggests his actions, and the perishable bodily organs, called by Macbeth (I, vii, 80) "corporal agent," which carry out the suggestions of the "Genius." Shakespeare uses the word "Genius" somewhat vaguely. But he has in mind the external "demon" or spirit which according to the Greek religion was appointed to watch over each human being and to guide his conduct. Cf. *Macb.*, III, i, 55, 56: "My *Genius* is rebuked, as it is said Mark Antony's was by Cæsar."

67–69 *the state of man . . . insurrection*] Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, II, iii, 169–

Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.

Re-enter LUCIUS

LUC. Sir, 't is your brother Cassius at the door,
Who doth desire to see you.
BRU. Is he alone?
LUC. No, sir, there are moe with him.
BRU. Do you know them?
LUC. No, sir; their hats are pluck'd about their ears,
And half their faces buried in their cloaks,
That by no means I may discover them
By any mark of favour.
BRU. Let 'em enter. [*Exit Lucius.*
They are the faction. O conspiracy,
Shamest thou to show thy dangerous brow by night,
When evils are most free? O, then, by day
Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none, conspiracy;
Hide it in smiles and affability:
For if thou path, thy native semblance on,

171: "'twixt his mental and his active parts Kingdom'd Achilles (*i. e.*, Achilles likened to a kingdom) in commotion rages And battles down himself."

70 *brother*] brother-in-law. Cassius had married Brutus' sister Junia.

72 *moe*] an old form of "more."

76 *favour*] feature, countenance.

79 *When evils . . . free*] When crimes are most free from restraint of law or shame.

83 *if thou . . . semblance on*] if thou walk in thy true semblance. "Path" means tread a path, or walk. The rare verb is occasionally used transitively; cf. Drayton's *Heroical Epistles*, xiv, 91: "pathing . . . un-

Not Erebus itself were dim enough
To hide thee from prevention.

Enter the conspirators, CASSIUS, CASCA, DECIUS, CINNA, METELLUS CIMBER, *and* TREBONIUS

CAS. I think we are too bold upon your rest:
Good morrow, Brutus; do we trouble you?
BRU. I have been up this hour, awake all night.
Know I these men that come along with you?
CAS. Yes, every man of them; and no man here
But honours you; and every one doth wish
You had but that opinion of yourself
Which every noble Roman bears of you.
This is Trebonius.
BRU. He is welcome hither.
CAS. This, Decius Brutus.
BRU. He is welcome too.
CAS. This, Casca; this, Cinna; and this, Metellus Cimber.
BRU. They are all welcome.
What watchful cares do interpose themselves
Betwixt your eyes and night?
CAS. Shall I entreat a word? [*They whisper.*
DEC. Here lies the east: doth not the day break here?
CASCA. No.

---

advised ways." "Thy native semblance on (*i. e.*, being on)" is an absolute clause.

84 *Erebus*] a dark region of Hades, the lower world. Cf. Ovid, *Metam.*, x, 76, xiv, 404.

85 *prevention*] detection, which would lead to prevention.

95 *Decius*] See note on I, ii, 1 (stage direction).

CIN. O, pardon, sir, it doth, and yon grey lines
That fret the clouds are messengers of day.
CASCA. You shall confess that you are both deceived.
Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises;
Which is a great way growing on the south,
Weighing the youthful season of the year.
Some two months hence up higher toward the north
He first presents his fire, and the high east
Stands as the Capitol, directly here.
BRU. Give me your hands all over, one by one.
CAS. And let us swear our resolution.
BRU. No, not an oath: if not the face of men,
The sufferance of our souls, the time's abuse, —
If these be motives weak, break off betimes,
And every man hence to his idle bed;
So let high-sighted tyranny range on
Till each man drop by lottery. But if these,
As I am sure they do, bear fire enough
To kindle cowards and to steel with valour
The melting spirits of women, then, countrymen,

107 *growing on*] encroaching on, advancing towards.
108 *Weighing*] Considering.
110 *the high east*] the east at its culminating point.
112 *all over*] all in succession.
114 *the face of men*] the anxiety written in every countenance.
115 *the time's abuse*] the wrongs or grievances of the age.
118 *high-sighted*] haughty, arrogant.
119 *by lottery*] by compulsorily drawing lots. In suppressing an insurrection it was customary for every tenth man drawn by lot to be executed. Cf. IV, i, 16–17, *infra*, "prick'd to die In our black sentence and proscription," and *Tim. of Ath.*, V, iv, 31: "By *decimation* and a *tithed death*."

What need we any spur but our own cause
To prick us to redress? what other bond
Than secret Romans that have spoke the word,
And will not palter? and what other oath
Than honesty to honesty engaged
That this shall be or we will fall for it?
Swear priests and cowards and men cautelous,
Old feeble carrions and such suffering souls
That welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear
Such creatures as men doubt: but do not stain
The even virtue of our enterprise,
Nor the insuppressive mettle of our spirits,
To think that or our cause or our performance
Did need an oath; when every drop of blood
That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,
Is guilty of a several bastardy
If he do break the smallest particle
Of any promise that hath pass'd from him.

CAS. But what of Cicero? shall we sound him?
I think he will stand very strong with us.

CASCA. Let us not leave him out.

CIN. No, by no means.

MET. O, let us have him, for his silver hairs
Will purchase us a good opinion,
And buy men's voices to commend our deeds:

126 *palter*] equivocate.
129 *cautelous*] crafty, deceitful.
130 *carrions*] corpses, carcases; a common word of contempt.
133 *even virtue*] calm, equable temper.
134 *insuppressive*] insuppressible, indomitable.
138 *a several bastardy*] a separate, distinct act of baseness or treachery.

It shall be said his judgement ruled our hands;
Our youths and wildness shall no whit appear,
But all be buried in his gravity.
BRU. O, name him not: let us not break with him,
For he will never follow any thing
That other men begin.
CAS. Then leave him out.
CASCA. Indeed he is not fit.
DEC. Shall no man else be touch'd but only Cæsar?
CAS. Decius, well urged: I think it is not meet
Mark Antony, so well beloved of Cæsar,
Should outlive Cæsar: we shall find of him
A shrewd contriver; and you know his means,
If he improve them, may well stretch so far
As to annoy us all: which to prevent,
Let Antony and Cæsar fall together.
BRU. Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,
Like wrath in death and envy afterwards;
For Antony is but a limb of Cæsar:
Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
We all stand up against the spirit of Cæsar,
And in the spirit of men there is no blood:
O, that we then could come by Cæsar's spirit,
And not dismember Cæsar! But, alas,
Cæsar must bleed for it! And, gentle friends,
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;

150 *break with*] communicate with.
158 *shrewd contriver*] mischievous intriguer.
164 *envy*] malice. Cf. 178, *infra*.

Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds:
And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,
Stir up their servants to an act of rage
And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make
Our purpose necessary and not envious:
Which so appearing to the common eyes,
We shall be call'd purgers, not murderers.
And for Mark Antony, think not of him;
For he can do no more than Cæsar's arm
When Cæsar's head is off.
CAS. Yet I fear him,
For in the ingrafted love he bears to Cæsar —
BRU. Alas, good Cassius, do not think of him:
If he love Cæsar, all that he can do
Is to himself, take thought and die for Cæsar:
And that were much he should, for he is given
To sports, to wildness and much company.
TREB. There is no fear in him; let him not die;
For he will live and laugh at this hereafter. [*Clock strikes.*
BRU. Peace! count the clock.
CAS. The clock hath stricken three.
TREB. 'T is time to part.
CAS. But it is doubtful yet
Whether Cæsar will come forth to-day or no;

178 *envious*] malicious. Cf. 164, *supra.*
187 *take thought*] grieve, turn melancholy; "thought" often means grief, sorrow, or melancholy, and the verb "think" has a like significance. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, III, xiii, 1: "*Think*, and die."
188 *that were much he should*] that would be difficult for him.
190 *no fear*] nothing to fear.

For he is superstitious grown of late,
Quite from the main opinion he held once
Of fantasy, of dreams and ceremonies:
It may be these apparent prodigies,
The unaccustom'd terror of this night
And the persuasion of his augurers,
May hold him from the Capitol to-day.

DEC. Never fear that: if he be so resolved,
I can o'ersway him; for he loves to hear
That unicorns may be betray'd with trees
And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,
Lions with toils and men with flatterers:
But when I tell him he hates flatterers,
He says he does, being then most flattered.
Let me work;
For I can give his humour the true bent,
And I will bring him to the Capitol.

CAS. Nay, we will all of us be there to fetch him.

196 *from the main opinion*] contrary to the firm opinion.

197 *ceremonies*] omens, portents. Cf. II, ii, 13, *infra:* "I never stood on *ceremonies*," and note.

200 *augurers*] official interpreters of omens.

204 *unicorns . . . trees*] The fabulous unicorn, the beast with which the lion was traditionally in conflict, was said to be invincible except when the lion standing in front of a tree avoided the unicorn's charge by a sudden withdrawal, and left the unicorn to impale its horn in the tree trunk. This trick of the lion in fight with the unicorn is fully described in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Bk. II, Canto V, stanza x.

205 *bears . . . holes*] Bears were trapped by mirrors in which they paused to survey their images and thus gave the hunters their opportunity of successful attack. Elephants were caught in pits dug by hunters, and lightly covered with hurdles and turf, which the animals were induced to tread and fall into.

BRU. By the eighth hour: is that the uttermost?
CIN. Be that the uttermost, and fail not then.
MET. Caius Ligarius doth bear Cæsar hard,
Who rated him for speaking well of Pompey:
I wonder none of you have thought of him.
BRU. Now, good Metellus, go along by him:
He loves me well, and I have given him reasons;
Send him but hither, and I'll fashion him.
CAS. The morning comes upon 's: we'll leave you, Brutus:
And, friends, disperse yourselves: but all remember
What you have said and show yourselves true Romans.
BRU. Good gentlemen, look fresh and merrily;
Let not our looks put on our purposes;
But bear it as our Roman actors do,
With untired spirits and formal constancy:
And so, good morrow to you every one.
[*Exeunt all but Brutus.*
Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep! It is no matter;
Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber:
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,

215 *Caius Ligarius*] Plutarch gives this name as *Quintus* Ligarius. *Caius* is North's error.
bear Cæsar hard] has a grudge against Cæsar. Cf. I, ii, 312, *supra*, and III, i, 158, *infra*.
219 *reasons*] *sc.*, for loving me.
225 *put on*] betray.
227 *formal constancy*] consistent dignity.
230 *honey-heavy*] charged with the sweetness of honey.
231 *figures*] vain fancies. Cf. *M. Wives*, IV, ii, 192–193: "if it be but to scrape the *figures* out of your husband's brains."

Which busy care draws in the brains of men;
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

Enter PORTIA

POR. Brutus, my lord!

BRU. Portia, what mean you? wherefore rise you now?
It is not for your health thus to commit
Your weak condition to the raw cold morning.

POR. Nor for yours neither. You've ungently, Brutus,
Stole from my bed: and yesternight at supper
You suddenly arose and walk'd about,
Musing and sighing, with your arms across;
And when I ask'd you what the matter was,
You stared upon me with ungentle looks:
I urged you further; then you scratch'd your head,
And too impatiently stamp'd with your foot:
Yet I insisted, yet you answer'd not,
But with an angry wafture of your hand
Gave sign for me to leave you: so I did,
Fearing to strengthen that impatience
Which seem'd too much enkindled, and withal
Hoping it was but an effect of humour,
Which sometime hath his hour with every man.
It will not let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep,
And, could it work so much upon your shape
As it hath much prevail'd on your condition,

246 *wafture*] wave. Rowe's spelling of the Folios' *wafter.*
250 *humour*] caprice.
254 *condition*] temper, disposition.

I should not know you, Brutus. Dear my lord,
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.
BRU. I am not well in health, and that is all.
POR. Brutus is wise, and, were he not in health,
He would embrace the means to come by it.
BRU. Why, so I do: good Portia, go to bed.
POR. Is Brutus sick, and is it physical
To walk unbraced and suck up the humours
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed,
To dare the vile contagion of the night,
And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air
To add unto his sickness? No, my Brutus;
You have some sick offence within your mind,
Which by the right and virtue of my place
I ought to know of: and, upon my knees,
I charm you, by my once commended beauty,
By all your vows of love and that great vow
Which did incorporate and make us one,
That you unfold to me, yourself, your half,
Why you are heavy, and what men to-night
Have had resort to you; for here have been
Some six or seven, who did hide their faces
Even from darkness.

261 *physical*] natural, wholesome. Cf. *Cor.*, I, v, 18–19: "The blood I drop is rather *physical* Than dangerous to me."
262 *unbraced*] with doublet unbuttoned. Cf. I, iii, 48, *supra*.
266 *rheumy and unpurged*] damp and impure or corrupt.
268 *sick offence*] morbid obstruction.
271 *I charm you*] I conjure or adjure you.

BRU. Kneel not, gentle Portia.
POR. I should not need, if you were gentle Brutus.
Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,
Is it excepted I should know no secrets
That appertain to you? Am I yourself
But, as it were, in sort or limitation,
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs
Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,
Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.
BRU. You are my true and honourable wife,
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart.
POR. If this were true, then should I know this secret.
I grant I am a woman, but withal
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife:
I grant I am a woman, but withal
A woman well reputed, Cato's daughter.
Think you I am no stronger than my sex,
Being so father'd and so husbanded?
Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose 'em:
I have made strong proof of my constancy,
Giving myself a voluntary wound
Here in the thigh: can I bear that with patience
And not my husband's secrets?
BRU. O ye gods,
Render me worthy of this noble wife! [*Knocking within.*
Hark, hark! one knocks: Portia, go in a while;

285 *in the suburbs*] on the borders, not at the centre or heart.

And by and by thy bosom shall partake
The secrets of my heart:
All my engagements I will construe to thee,
All the charactery of my sad brows.
Leave me with haste. [*Exit Portia.*] Lucius, who's that knocks?

Re-enter LUCIUS *with* LIGARIUS

LUC. Here is a sick man that would speak with you.
BRU. Caius Ligarius, that Metellus spake of.
Boy, stand aside. Caius Ligarius! how?
LIG. Vouchsafe good morrow from a feeble tongue.
BRU. O, what a time have you chose out, brave Caius,
To wear a kerchief! Would you were not sick!
LIG. I am not sick, if Brutus have in hand
Any exploit worthy the name of honour.
BRU. Such an exploit have I in hand, Ligarius,
Had you a healthful ear to hear of it.
LIG. By all the gods that Romans bow before,
I here discard my sickness! Soul of Rome!
Brave son, derived from honourable loins!
Thou, like an exorcist, hast conjured up
My mortified spirit. Now bid me run,
And I will strive with things impossible,
Yea, get the better of them. What's to do?

308 *charactery*] written symbols, characters (*i. e.*, of the written alphabet). The word was commonly applied to "shorthand." It was accented on the second and fourth syllables.
313 *Vouchsafe*] Deign to accept.
315 *To wear a kerchief*] a common mode of treating illness.
323 *exorcist*] one who raises spirits. Cf. *All's Well*, V, iii, 298, and note.
324 *My mortified spirit*] My soul which was dead.

BRU. A piece of work that will make sick men whole.
LIG. But are not some whole that we must make sick?
BRU. That must we also. What it is, my Caius,
I shall unfold to thee, as we are going
To whom it must be done.
LIG. Set on your foot,
And with a heart new-fired I follow you,
To do I know not what: but it sufficeth
That Brutus leads me on.
BRU. Follow me then. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — CÆSAR'S HOUSE

Thunder and lightning. Enter CÆSAR, *in his night-gown*

CÆS. Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace to-night:
Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep cried out,
"Help, ho! they murder Cæsar!" Who's within?

Enter a Servant

SERV. My lord?
CÆS. Go bid the priests do present sacrifice,
And bring me their opinions of success.
SERV. I will, my lord. [*Exit.*

Enter CALPURNIA

CAL. What mean you, Cæsar? think you to walk forth?
You shall not stir out of your house to-day.

SCENE II (stage direction) *night-gown*] dressing-gown.
6 *success*] the result.

CÆS. Cæsar shall forth: the things that threaten'd me
Ne'er look'd but on my back; when they shall see
The face of Cæsar, they are vanished.
CAL. Cæsar, I never stood on ceremonies,
Yet now they fright me. There is one within,
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
A lioness hath whelped in the streets;
And graves have yawn'd, and yielded up their dead;
Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
Horses did neigh and dying men did groan,
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
O Cæsar! these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them.
CÆS. What can be avoided
Whose end is purposed by the mighty gods?
Yet Cæsar shall go forth; for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Cæsar.
CAL. When beggars die, there are no comets seen;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.
CÆS. Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;

13 *stood on ceremonies*] attached importance to omens, portents. For "ceremonies" cf. note on I, i, 70, *supra*, and I, ii, 157, *supra*.

Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

Re-enter Servant

What say the augurers?

SERV. They would not have you to stir forth to-day.
Plucking the entrails of an offering forth,
They could not find a heart within the beast.

CÆS. The gods do this in shame of cowardice:
Cæsar should be a beast without a heart
If he should stay at home to-day for fear.
No, Cæsar shall not: danger knows full well
That Cæsar is more dangerous than he:
We are two lions litter'd in one day,
And I the elder and more terrible:
And Cæsar shall go forth.

CAL. Alas, my lord,
Your wisdom is consumed in confidence.
Do not go forth to-day: call it my fear
That keeps you in the house and not your own.
We'll send Mark Antony to the senate-house,
And he shall say you are not well to-day:
Let me, upon my knee, prevail in this.

CÆS. Mark Antony shall say I am not well,
And, for thy humour, I will stay at home.

Enter DECIUS

Here's Decius Brutus, he shall tell them so.

DEC. Cæsar, all hail! good morrow, worthy Cæsar:
I come to fetch you to the senate-house.

---

46 *We are*] Capell's emendation of the Folio reading *We hear.*

CÆS. And you are come in very happy time,
To bear my greeting to the senators
And tell them that I will not come to-day:
Cannot, is false, and that I dare not, falser:
I will not come to-day: tell them so, Decius.
CAL. Say he is sick.
CÆS. Shall Cæsar send a lie?
Have I in conquest stretch'd mine arm so far,
To be afeard to tell graybeards the truth?
Decius, go tell them Cæsar will not come.
DEC. Most mighty Cæsar, let me know some cause,
Lest I be laugh'd at when I tell them so.
CÆS. The cause is in my will: I will not come;
That is enough to satisfy the senate.
But, for your private satisfaction,
Because I love you, I will let you know.
Calpurnia here, my wife, stays me at home:
She dreamt to-night she saw my statuë,
Which like a fountain with an hundred spouts
Did run pure blood, and many lusty Romans
Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it:
And these does she apply for warnings and portents
And evils imminent, and on her knee
Hath begg'd that I will stay at home to-day.

76 *statuë*] The Folios here read *Statue*. But *statua*, a trisyllable (as required here by the metre), was a more common form in Elizabethan poetry and prose. Bacon invariably wrote *statua*. Cf. III, ii, 188, *infra*. The compromise *statuë* is a suggestion of the Cambridge editors.

80 *And . . . portents*] Thus the Folios; an irregularly long line.

81 *And evils*] Thus the Folios; many editors substitute *Of evils*.

DEC. This dream is all amiss interpreted;
It was a vision fair and fortunate:
Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,
In which so many smiling Romans bathed,
Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck
Reviving blood, and that great men shall press
For tinctures, stains, relics and cognizance.
This by Calpurnia's dream is signified.
CÆS. And this way have you well expounded it.
DEC. I have, when you have heard what I can say:
And know it now: the senate have concluded
To give this day a crown to mighty Cæsar.
If you shall send them word you will not come,
Their minds may change. Besides, it were a mock
Apt to be render'd, for some one to say
"Break up the senate till another time,
When Cæsar's wife shall meet with better dreams."
If Cæsar hide himself, shall they not whisper
"Lo, Cæsar is afraid"?
Pardon me, Cæsar, for my dear dear love

89 *tinctures . . . cognizance*] a reference to the habit of dipping handkerchiefs or napkins in the blood of saints or martyrs. The "cognizance," here "token" or "memento," is properly applied to a heraldic badge. Decius's interpretation of Calpurnia's dream, though it reassures Cæsar, has ironical significance.

93 *concluded*] determined.

96–97 *a mock . . . render'd*] a very likely sarcasm to be offered as rejoinder.

102–104 *my dear . . . liable*] my affectionate concern for your welfare bids me speak out thus, and the propriety of my thought is subservient to my love of you. In other words, reason might restrain my freedom of speech, but my love makes me frank.

To your proceeding bids me tell you this,
And reason to my love is liable.

CÆS. How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia!
I am ashamed I did yield to them.
Give me my robe, for I will go.

Enter PUBLIUS, BRUTUS, LIGARIUS, METELLUS, CASCA, TREBONIUS, *and* CINNA

And look where Publius is come to fetch me.

PUB. Good morrow, Cæsar.

CÆS. Welcome, Publius.
What, Brutus, are you stirr'd so early too?
Good morrow, Casca. Caius Ligarius,
Cæsar was ne'er so much your enemy
As that same ague which hath made you lean.
What is 't o'clock?

BRU. Cæsar, 't is strucken eight.

CÆS. I thank you for your pains and courtesy.

Enter ANTONY

See! Antony, that revels long o' nights,
Is notwithstanding up. Good morrow, Antony.

ANT. So to most noble Cæsar.

CÆS. Bid them prepare within:
I am to blame to be thus waited for.
Now, Cinna: now, Metellus: what, Trebonius!
I have an hour's talk in store for you;
Remember that you call on me to-day:
Be near me, that I may remember you.

TREB. Cæsar, I will. [*Aside.*] And so near will I be,
That your best friends shall wish I had been further.

CÆS. Good friends, go in and taste some wine with me;
And we like friends will straightway go together.
BRU. [*Aside.*] That every like is not the same, O Cæsar,
The heart of Brutus yearns to think upon! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III — A STREET NEAR THE CAPITOL

Enter ARTEMIDORUS, *reading a paper*

ART. "Cæsar, beware of Brutus; take heed of Cassius; come not near Casca; have an eye to Cinna; trust not Trebonius; mark well Metellus Cimber: Decius Brutus loves thee not: thou hast wronged Caius Ligarius. There is but one mind in all these men, and it is bent against Cæsar. If thou beest not immortal, look about you: security gives way to conspiracy. The mighty gods defend thee!

Thy lover, ARTEMIDORUS."

Here will I stand till Cæsar pass along,
And as a suitor will I give him this.
My heart laments that virtue cannot live
Out of the teeth of emulation.
If thou read this, O Cæsar, thou mayst live;
If not, the Fates with traitors do contrive. [*Exit.*

129 *yearns*] Capell's emendation of the Folio reading *earns*, which is an old form of the same word. The lines imply that Cæsar's suave courtesy, and especially his use of the words "like friends," rouses a pang of remorse in Brutus's heart; it grieves him to the heart to think that men may be *like* friends, and not necessarily be really friends.

6 *security gives way to*] over-confidence opens the road to.

7 *Thy lover*] thy friend; a common usage. Cf. III, ii, 13 and 44, *infra*, V, i, 94.

11 *emulation*] jealousy, malicious rivalry.

13 *the Fates . . . contrive*] the Fates join with traitors in plotting (thy ruin).

SCENE IV — ANOTHER PART OF THE SAME STREET, BEFORE THE HOUSE OF BRUTUS

Enter PORTIA *and* LUCIUS

POR. I prithee, boy, run to the senate-house;
Stay not to answer me, but get thee gone.
Why dost thou stay?
LUC. To know my errand, madam.
POR. I would have had thee there, and here again,
Ere I can tell thee what thou shouldst do there.
O constancy, be strong upon my side!
Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue!
I have a man's mind, but a woman's might.
How hard it is for women to keep counsel!
Art thou here yet?
LUC. Madam, what should I do? 10
Run to the Capitol, and nothing else?
And so return to you, and nothing else?
POR. Yes, bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,
For he went sickly forth: and take good note
What Cæsar doth, what suitors press to him.
Hark, boy! what noise is that?
LUC. I hear none, madam.
POR. Prithee, listen well:
I heard a bustling rumour like a fray,
And the wind brings it from the Capitol.
LUC. Sooth, madam, I hear nothing.

---

6 *constancy*] firmness, resolution.
18 *a bustling rumour*] a murmur of tumult.

Enter the Soothsayer

POR. Come hither, fellow: 20
Which way hast thou been?
SOOTH. At mine own house, good lady.
POR. What is 't o'clock?
SOOTH. About the ninth hour, lady.
POR. Is Cæsar yet gone to the Capitol?
SOOTH. Madam, not yet: I go to take my stand,
To see him pass on to the Capitol.
POR. Thou hast some suit to Cæsar, hast thou not?
SOOTH. That I have, lady: if it will please Cæsar
To be so good to Cæsar as to hear me,
I shall beseech him to befriend himself.
POR. Why, know'st thou any harm's intended
towards him? 30
SOOTH. None that I know will be, much that I fear
may chance.
Good morrow to you. Here the street is narrow:
The throng that follows Cæsar at the heels,
Of senators, of prætors, common suitors,
Will crowd a feeble man almost to death:
I'll get me to a place more void and there
Speak to great Cæsar as he comes along. [*Exit.*

(stage direction) *Enter the Soothsayer*] Thus the Folios. Rowe substituted *Enter Artemidorus*, on the ground that it was needless to duplicate these two characters, who perform identical functions of warning. But Plutarch introduces both the soothsayer and Artemidorus, whom he describes as a doctor of rhetoric in the Greek tongue, who was intimate with Brutus's confederates. In the next scene the Folios mark the entry of the two characters separately, and allot speeches to each.

POR. I must go in. Ay me, how weak a thing
The heart of woman is! O Brutus,
The heavens speed thee in thine enterprise!
Sure, the boy heard me. Brutus hath a suit
That Cæsar will not grant. O, I grow faint.
Run, Lucius, and commend me to my lord;
Say I am merry: come to me again,
And bring me word what he doth say to thee.
[*Exeunt severally.*

41–42 *Brutus . . . not grant*] These words are spoken to delude the boy, Lucius, who, she is afraid, has just overheard her reference to the true cause of her anxiety for her husband.

ACT THIRD — SCENE I — ROME

BEFORE THE CAPITOL — THE SENATE SITTING ABOVE

A crowd of people; among them ARTEMIDORUS *and the* Soothsayer. *Flourish. Enter* CÆSAR, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CASCA, DECIUS, METELLUS, TREBONIUS, CINNA, ANTONY, LEPIDUS, POPILIUS, PUBLIUS, *and others*

CÆSAR

THE IDES OF MARCH ARE come.

SOOTH. Ay, Cæsar; but not gone.

ART. Hail, Cæsar! read this schedule.

DEC. Trebonius doth desire you to o'er-read,
At your best leisure, this his humble suit.

ART. O Cæsar, read mine first; for mine's a suit
That touches Cæsar nearer: read it, great Cæsar.

CÆS. What touches us ourself shall be last served.

ART. Delay not, Cæsar; read it instantly.

CÆS. What, is the fellow mad?
PUB. Sirrah, give place.
CAS. What, urge you your petitions in the street?
Come to the Capitol.

CÆSAR *goes up to the Senate-house, the rest following*

POP. I wish your enterprise to-day may thrive.
CAS. What enterprise, Popilius?
POP. Fare you well.
[*Advances to Cæsar.*
BRU. What said Popilius Lena?
CAS. He wish'd to-day our enterprise might thrive.
I fear our purpose is discovered.
BRU. Look, how he makes to Cæsar: mark him.
CAS. Casca,
Be sudden, for we fear prevention.
Brutus, what shall be done? If this be known,
Cassius or Cæsar never shall turn back,
For I will slay myself.
BRU. Cassius, be constant:
Popilius Lena speaks not of our purposes;
For, look, he smiles, and Cæsar doth not change.

---

12 *the Capitol*] See note on I, iii, 126, *supra*, and III, i, 116, *infra*. According to Plutarch the Senate was meeting, not at the Capitol, but in Pompey's theatre.

20–22 *If this . . . slay myself*] If the plot be discovered, either Cassius or Cæsar shall never get away from here alive. At the worst, if Cæsar escape, I, Cassius, will slay myself. Cf. I, iii, 91, *supra*, and V, i, 96 *seq.*, *infra*.

22 *be constant*] be firm, do not flinch.

24 *change*] change colour, turn pale.

CAS. Trebonius knows his time; for, look you, Brutus,
He draws Mark Antony out of the way.
[*Exeunt Antony and Trebonius.*
DEC. Where is Metellus Cimber? Let him go,
And presently prefer his suit to Cæsar.
BRU. He is address'd: press near and second him.
CIN. Casca, you are the first that rears your hand.
CÆS. Are we all ready? What is now amiss
That Cæsar and his senate must redress?
MET. Most high, most mighty and most puissant Cæsar,
Metellus Cimber throws before thy seat
An humble heart: — [*Kneeling.*
CÆS. I must prevent thee, Cimber.
These couchings and these lowly courtesies
Might fire the blood of ordinary men,
And turn pre-ordinance and first decree
Into the law of children. Be not fond,
To think that Cæsar bears such rebel blood
That will be thaw'd from the true quality
With that which melteth fools, I mean, sweet words,
Low-crooked court'sies and base spaniel-fawning.
Thy brother by decree is banished:

---

29 *address'd*] ready.

35 *prevent*] anticipate.

36 *couchings*] cringings, stoopings.

38–39 *turn pre-ordinance . . . children*] turn enactments (which have already been ordained and decreed once for all) into children's law which is a mere passing whim, and lacks authority. The Folios read *lare* (for *law*) which is meaningless. The correction is due to Johnson.

If thou dost bend and pray and fawn for him,
I spurn thee like a cur out of my way.
Know, Cæsar doth not wrong, nor without cause
Will he be satisfied.

MET. Is there no voice more worthy than my own,
To sound more sweetly in great Cæsar's ear
For the repealing of my banish'd brother?

BRU. I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery, Cæsar,
Desiring thee that Publius Cimber may
Have an immediate freedom of repeal.

CÆS. What, Brutus!

CAS. Pardon, Cæsar; Cæsar, pardon:
As low as to thy foot doth Cassius fall,
To beg enfranchisement for Publius Cimber.

CÆS. I could be well moved, if I were as you;

47 *Cæsar . . . cause*] The sentence means "Cæsar is incapable of a wrong action, nor except on some very real and substantial ground would he be content (to entertain pardon of one whom he has punished)." Ben Jonson in his *Discoveries*, sec. 64, quoted, as one of Shakespeare's ridiculous errors, this passage in another form. According to Jonson, the character, whom Cæsar is here addressing, first interrupted him with the remark, "Cæsar, thou dost me wrong," to which Cæsar then replies, "Cæsar did never wrong, but with just cause; and such like." If Jonson correctly cited the line as Shakespeare originally wrote it, Shakespeare probably used the word "wrong" in the sense of "injury" (cf. III, ii, 110, "Cæsar has had great *wrong*"), an interpretation which relieves the line of absurdity. Perhaps the two lines originally ran:

Know, Cæsar doth not wrong, but with just cause;
Nor without cause will he be satisfied.

It is often assumed that in deference to Jonson's censure, Shakespeare adopted the amended reading of the Folios.

51 *repealing*] recalling. Cf. line 54, *infra*, "repeal," *i. e.*, recall.

If I could pray to move, prayers would move me:
But I am constant as the northern star,
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.
The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks;
They are all fire and every one doth shine;
But there's but one in all doth hold his place:
So in the world; 't is furnish'd well with men,
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive:
Yet in the number I do know but one
That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshaked of motion: and that I am he,
Let me a little show it, even in this;
That I was constant Cimber should be banish'd,
And constant do remain to keep him so.

CIN. O Cæsar,—

CÆS. Hence! wilt thou lift up Olympus?

DEC. Great Cæsar, —

CÆS. Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?

CASCA. Speak, hands, for me!

[Casca first, then the other Conspirators and Marcus Brutus stab Cæsar.

59 *If I could pray to move*] If I were of your calibre and could bring myself to seek to move another by my entreaties.

60 *constant*] firm, steadfast.

61 *resting*] immovable.

67 *apprehensive*] endowed with apprehension or intelligence.

69 *holds on his rank*] holds to his place.

70 *Unshaked of motion*] Undisturbed by movement (of others).

72–73 *constant*] resolute.

75 *Doth*] Thus the First Folio. The Second Folio substitutes *Do*, and converts the note of interrogation at the end of the line into a full

CÆS. Et tu, Brute? Then fall, Cæsar! [*Dies.*
CIN. Liberty! freedom! Tyranny is dead!
Run hence, proclaim, cry it about the streets.
CAS. Some to the common pulpits, and cry out
"Liberty, freedom and enfranchisement!"
BRU. People, and senators, be not affrighted;
Fly not; stand still: ambition's debt is paid.
CASCA. Go to the pulpit, Brutus.
DEC. And Cassius too.
BRU. Where's Publius?
CIN. Here, quite confounded with this mutiny.
MET. Stand fast together, lest some friend of Cæsar's
Should chance —
BRU. Talk not of standing. Publius, good cheer;
There is no harm intended to your person,
Nor to no Roman else: so tell them, Publius.

---

stop. Some commentators think Cæsar addresses himself here to the last speaker Decius (Brutus). But much dramatic point would thereby be lost. Nowhere in the play is Decius called by his surname.

77 *Et tu, Brute*] These words, which owe their proverbial acceptance to their appearance here, are not in Plutarch nor in any classical author. But Shakespeare did not invent them. They were in print in English books before Shakespeare wrote this play. The line "*Et tu, Brute?* wilt thou stab Cæsar too?" appears both in the *True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of Yorke*, 1595, the old play on which Shakespeare based the Third Part of *Hen. VI*, and in Nicholson's *Acolastus*, a poem printed in 1602. Probably, too, the words "Et tu, Brute?" figured in the lost Latin play of Julius Cæsar, which was acted at Oxford in 1582.

80 *the common pulpits*] public rostra or platforms in the forum and open spaces of the city, from which public officials and others were wont to address popular audiences. Cf. III, ii, 63, *infra*.

CAS. And leave us, Publius; lest that the people
Rushing on us should do your age some mischief.
BRU. Do so: and let no man abide this deed
But we the doers.

Re-enter TREBONIUS

CAS. Where is Antony?
TRE. Fled to his house amazed:
Men, wives and children stare, cry out and run
As it were doomsday.
BRU. Fates, we will know your pleasures:
That we shall die, we know; 't is but the time,
And drawing days out, that men stand upon.
CAS. Why, he that cuts off twenty years of life
Cuts off so many years of fearing death.
BRU. Grant that, and then is death a benefit:
So are we Cæsar's friends, that have abridged
His time of fearing death. Stoop, Romans, stoop,
And let us bathe our hands in Cæsar's blood
Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords:
Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,
And waving our red weapons o'er our heads,
Let's all cry "Peace, freedom and liberty!"
CAS. Stoop then, and wash. How many ages hence

95 *abide*] suffer the consequences of. Cf. III, ii, 114, *infra:* "some will dear *abide* it."

101 *stand upon*] make of importance.

102–103 *Why, he that cuts off . . . death*] In the Folios these two lines are assigned to "Cask," which looks like a misprint for "Casca" rather than for "Cassius." Pope first gave them to Cassius. They seem equally appropriate to Casca.

Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!
BRU. How many times shall Cæsar bleed in sport,
That now on Pompey's basis lies along
No worthier than the dust!
CAS. So oft as that shall be,
So often shall the knot of us be call'd
The men that gave their country liberty.
DEC. What, shall we forth?
CAS. Ay, every man away:
Brutus shall lead, and we will grace his heels
With the most boldest and best hearts of Rome.

Enter a Servant

BRU. Soft! who comes here? A friend of Antony's.
SERV. Thus, Brutus, did my master bid me kneel;
Thus did Mark Antony bid me fall down;
And, being prostrate, thus he bade me say:
Brutus is noble, wise, valiant and honest;
Cæsar was mighty, bold, royal and loving:
Say I love Brutus and I honour him;
Say I fear'd Cæsar, honour'd him and loved him.
If Brutus will vouchsafe that Antony
May safely come to him and be resolved

116 *Pompey's basis*] the base of Pompey's statue, which stood in the court of Pompey's theatre, which was, according to Plutarch, the scene of Cæsar's death, and not the Capitol, as Shakespeare represents it. Cf. I, iii, 126, and III, i, 12, *supra*.
118 *knot*] band.
123 *A friend of Antony's*] Plutarch makes Antony's messenger his son.
132 *resolved*] certified or fully informed.

How Cæsar hath deserved to lie in death,
Mark Antony shall not love Cæsar dead
So well as Brutus living, but will follow
The fortunes and affairs of noble Brutus
Thorough the hazards of this untrod state
With all true faith. So says my master Antony.

BRU. Thy master is a wise and valiant Roman;
I never thought him worse.
Tell him, so please him come unto this place,
He shall be satisfied and, by my honour,
Depart untouch'd.

SERV. I'll fetch him presently. [*Exit.*

BRU. I know that we shall have him well to friend.

CAS. I wish we may: but yet have I a mind
That fears him much, and my misgiving still
Falls shrewdly to the purpose.

Re-enter ANTONY

BRU. But here comes Antony. Welcome, Mark Antony.

ANT. O mighty Cæsar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.
I know not, gentlemen, what you intend,
Who else must be let blood, who else is rank:
If I myself, there is no hour so fit

137 *Thorough*] a common variant of "through."

144 *have him well to friend*] have him altogether for friend.

146–147 *my misgiving . . . purpose*] my suspicion has a habit of coming unpleasantly near the mark.

153 *is rank*] is over-full (of blood), is in need of blood-letting. Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 71: "a river that is *rank* [*i. e.*, overflowing]."

As Cæsar's death's hour, nor no instrument
Of half that worth as those your swords, made rich
With the most noble blood of all this world.
I do beseech ye, if you bear me hard,
Now, whilst your purpled hands do reek and smoke,
Fulfil your pleasure. Live a thousand years,
I shall not find myself so apt to die:
No place will please me so, no mean of death,
As here by Cæsar, and by you cut off,
The choice and master spirits of this age.
BRU. O Antony, beg not your death of us.
Though now we must appear bloody and cruel,
As, by our hands and this our present act,
You see we do; yet see you but our hands
And this the bleeding business they have done:
Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful;
And pity to the general wrong of Rome —
As fire drives out fire, so pity pity —
Hath done this deed on Cæsar. For your part,
To you our swords have leaden points, Mark Antony:
Our arms in strength of malice, and our hearts

158 *bear me hard*] harbour a grudge against me. Cf. I, ii, 312, and II, i, 215, *supra*.

160 *Live*] Should I live.

172 *As fire drives out fire*] A favourite proverbial allusion in Shakespeare. Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, ii, 45: "one fire burns out another's burning." *Two Gent.*, II, iv, 188: "one heat another heat expels." *Cor.*, IV, vii, 54: "One fire drives out one fire."

175–176 *Our arms . . . receive you in*] Our arms in the intensity of hatred of Cæsar's misdeeds, and our hearts full of brotherly love for our countrymen welcome you among us.

Of brothers' temper, do receive you in
With all kind love, good thoughts and reverence.
CAS. Your voice shall be as strong as any man's
In the disposing of new dignities.
BRU. Only be patient till we have appeased
The multitude, beside themselves with fear,
And then we will deliver you the cause
Why I, that did love Cæsar when I struck him,
Have thus proceeded.
ANT. I doubt not of your wisdom.
Let each man render me his bloody hand:
First, Marcus Brutus, will I shake with you;
Next, Caius Cassius, do I take your hand;
Now, Decius Brutus, yours; now yours, Metellus;
Yours, Cinna; and, my valiant Casca, yours;
Though last, not least in love, yours, good Trebonius.
Gentlemen all, — alas, what shall I say?
My credit now stands on such slippery ground,
That one of two bad ways you must conceit me,
Either a coward or a flatterer.
That I did love thee, Cæsar, O, 't is true:
If then thy spirit look upon us now,
Shall it not grieve thee dearer than thy death,
To see thy Antony making his peace,
Shaking the bloody fingers of thy foes,
Most noble! in the presence of thy corse?

178–179 *Your voice . . . dignities*] A characteristic reminder from the politician Cassius that the revolution may yield its leaders substantial profit.

193 *conceit me*] conceive or think of me.

197 *dearer*] more forcibly.

Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds,
Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood,
It would become me better than to close
In terms of friendship with thine enemies.
Pardon me, Julius! Here wast thou bay'd, brave hart;
Here didst thou fall, and here thy hunters stand,
Sign'd in thy spoil and crimson'd in thy lethe.
O world, thou wast the forest to this hart;
And this, indeed, O world, the heart of thee.
How like a deer strucken by many princes
Dost thou here lie!

CAS. Mark Antony, —

ANT. Pardon me, Caius Cassius:
The enemies of Cæsar shall say this;
Then, in a friend, it is cold modesty.

CAS. I blame you not for praising Cæsar so;
But what compact mean you to have with us?
Will you be prick'd in number of our friends,
Or shall we on, and not depend on you?

ANT. Therefore I took your hands, but was indeed
Sway'd from the point by looking down on Cæsar.
Friends am I with you all and love you all,

205 *bay'd, brave hart*] brought to bay, like a deer hunted by hounds.

207 *Sign'd . . . lethe*] Stained by thy slaughter and reddened by thy violent death. Hunters were wont to dip their hands in the blood of their prey after it yielded its last breath. Cf. *K. John*, II, i, 321–323, "And, like a jolly troop of huntsmen, come Our lusty English, all *with purpled hands, Dyed in the dying slaughter* of their foes."

208–209 *hart . . . heart*] the same unimpressive quibble is found in *As you like it*, III, ii, 231, and *Tw. Night*, I, i, 21; IV, i, 58.

214 *cold modesty*] frigid moderation.

217 *prick'd in number of*] enrolled amongst. Cf. IV, i, 1, *infra*.

Upon this hope that you shall give me reasons
Why and wherein Cæsar was dangerous.
BRU. Or else were this a savage spectacle:
Our reasons are so full of good regard
That were you, Antony, the son of Cæsar,
You should be satisfied.
ANT. That's all I seek:
And am moreover suitor that I may
Produce his body to the market-place,
And in the pulpit, as becomes a friend,
Speak in the order of his funeral.
BRU. You shall, Mark Antony.
CAS. Brutus, a word with you.
[*Aside to Bru.*] You know not what you do: do not consent
That Antony speak in his funeral:
Know you how much the people may be moved
By that which he will utter?
BRU. By your pardon:
I will myself into the pulpit first,
And show the reason of our Cæsar's death:
What Antony shall speak, I will protest
He speaks by leave and by permission,
And that we are contented Cæsar shall
Have all true rites and lawful ceremonies.
It shall advantage more than do us wrong.
CAS. I know not what may fall; I like it not.
BRU. Mark Antony, here, take you Cæsar's body.
You shall not in your funeral speech blame us,

225 *good regard*] just consideration, good motives.
229 *Produce . . . market-place*] Bear forth his body to the Forum.

But speak all good you can devise of Cæsar,
And say you do't by our permission;
Else shall you not have any hand at all
About his funeral: and you shall speak
In the same pulpit whereto I am going,
After my speech is ended.
ANT. Be it so;
I do desire no more.
BRU. Prepare the body then, and follow us.
[*Exeunt all but Antony.*
ANT. O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times.
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,
Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue,
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;
Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
And dreadful objects so familiar,
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quarter'd with the hands of war;
All pity choked with custom of fell deeds:
And Cæsar's spirit ranging for revenge,
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,

258 *the tide of times*] the course of the ages.

272 *Ate*] the goddess of discord in Greek mythology. Cf. *K. John*, II, i, 68: "An *Ate*, stirring him to blood and strife," and note.

Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry "Havoc," and let slip the dogs of war;
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial.

Enter a Servant

You serve Octavius Cæsar, do you not?

SERV. I do, Mark Antony.

ANT. Cæsar did write for him to come to Rome.

SERV. He did receive his letters, and is coming;
And bid me say to you by word of mouth —
O Cæsar! [*Seeing the body.*

ANT. Thy heart is big; get thee apart and weep.
Passion, I see, is catching, for mine eyes,
Seeing those beads of sorrow stand in thine,
Began to water. Is thy master coming?

SERV. He lies to-night within seven leagues of Rome.

ANT. Post back with speed, and tell him what hath chanced:
Here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome,
No Rome of safety for Octavius yet;
Hie hence, and tell him so. Yet stay awhile;
Thou shalt not back till I have borne this corse
Into the market-place: there shall I try,

274 "*Havoc*"] No quarter! Cf. *K. John*, II, i, 357, and note.
dogs of war] Cf. *Hen. V*, I, Cho. 7: where the "*hounds*" of Mars are defined as "famine, sword and fire"; so too *1 Hen. VI*, IV, ii, 10–11.

284 *for mine eyes*] The Second Folio's correction of the First Folio reading *from mine eyes*.

290 *No Rome of safety*] Cf. I, ii, 156, *supra*: "*Rome* indeed, and *room* enough," and note.

In my oration, how the people take
The cruel issue of these bloody men;
According to the which, thou shalt discourse
To young Octavius of the state of things.
Lend me your hand. [*Exeunt with Cæsar's body.*

SCENE II — THE FORUM

Enter BRUTUS *and* CASSIUS, *and a throng of* Citizens

CITIZENS. We will be satisfied; let us be satisfied.

BRU. Then follow me, and give me audience, friends.
Cassius, go you into the other street,
And part the numbers.
Those that will hear me speak, let 'em stay here;
Those that will follow Cassius, go with him;
And public reasons shall be rendered
Of Cæsar's death.

FIRST CIT. I will hear Brutus speak.

SEC. CIT. I will hear Cassius; and compare their reasons,
When severally we hear them rendered. 10
[*Exit Cassius, with some of the Citizens. Brutus goes into the pulpit.*

THIRD CIT. The noble Brutus is ascended: silence!

BRU. Be patient till the last.
Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my cause, and be silent, that you may hear: believe me for mine

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295 *issue*] result of the action.

4 *part the numbers*] disperse the crowd.

13 *lovers*] friends. Cf. II, ii, 7, *supra;* line 44 *infra.*

honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe: censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses, that you may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Cæsar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Cæsar, this is my answer: not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Cæsar were living, and die all slaves, than that Cæsar were dead, to live all freemen? As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak; for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.

ALL. None, Brutus, none.

BRU. Then none have I offended. I have done no more to Cæsar than you shall do to Brutus. The question of his death is enrolled in the Capitol; his glory not extenuated, wherein he was worthy, nor his offences enforced, for which he suffered death.

---

16 *censure*] judge.

36–37 *The question . . . Capitol*] The statement of the reasons for his death is recorded in the records of the Senate.

38–39 *extenuated . . . enforced*] diminished or underrated . . . exagger-

Enter ANTONY *and others, with* CÆSAR'S *body*

Here comes his body, mourned by Mark Antony: who, 40
though he had no hand in his death, shall receive the
benefit of his dying, a place in the commonwealth; as
which of you shall not? With this I depart, — that, as
I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the
same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country
to need my death.

ALL. Live, Brutus! live, live!

FIRST CIT. Bring him with triumph home unto his house.

SEC. CIT. Give him a statue with his ancestors.

THIRD CIT. Let him be Cæsar.

FOURTH CIT. Cæsar's better parts 50
Shall be crown'd in Brutus.

FIRST CIT. We'll bring him to his house with shouts and clamours.

BRU. My countrymen, —

SEC. CIT. Peace! silence! Brutus speaks.

FIRST CIT. Peace, ho!

BRU. Good countrymen, let me depart alone,
And, for my sake, stay here with Antony:
Do grace to Cæsar's corpse, and grace his speech
Tending to Cæsar's glories, which Mark Antony
By our permission is allow'd to make.
I do entreat you, not a man depart, 60
Save I alone, till Antony have spoke. [*Exit.*

ated. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, V, ii, 124: "We will *extenuate* rather than *enforce*."

44 *lover*] friend. Cf. line 13, *supra*.

FIRST CIT. Stay, ho! and let us hear Mark Antony.
THIRD CIT. Let him go up into the public chair;
We'll hear him. Noble Antony, go up.
ANT. For Brutus' sake, I am beholding to you.
[Goes into the pulpit.
FOURTH CIT. What does he say of Brutus?
THIRD CIT. He says, for Brutus' sake,
He finds himself beholding to us all.
FOURTH CIT. 'T were best he speak no harm of Brutus here.
FIRST CIT. This Cæsar was a tyrant.
THIRD CIT. Nay, that's certain:
We are blest that Rome is rid of him.
SEC. CIT. Peace! let us hear what Antony can say.
ANT. You gentle Romans, —
ALL. Peace, ho! Let us hear him.
ANT. Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Cæsar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Cæsar answer'd it.

63 *the public chair*] the public rostrum (in the Forum). Cf. III, i, 80: "the common pulpits," *i. e.*, the public rostra.
65 *beholding*] under obligation, indebted; so line 67.
75–76 *The evil . . . their bones*] Cf. *Hen. VIII*, IV, ii, 45–46: "Men's evil manners live in brass; their virtues We write in water."
80 *answer'd it*] atoned for it.

Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest, —
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men, —
Come I to speak in Cæsar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Cæsar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
O judgement! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

FIRST CIT. Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.

95 *on the Lupercal*] on the feast of Lupercalia. Cf. I, i, 68, *supra*.

SEC. CIT. If thou consider rightly of the matter,
Cæsar has had great wrong.
THIRD CIT. Has he, masters?
I fear there will a worse come in his place.
FOURTH CIT. Mark'd ye his words? He would not take the crown;
Therefore 't is certain he was not ambitious.
FIRST CIT. If it be found so, some will dear abide it.
SEC. CIT. Poor soul! his eyes are red as fire with weeping.
THIRD CIT. There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony.
FOURTH CIT. Now mark him, he begins again to speak.
ANT. But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world: now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong and Cassius wrong,
Who, you all know, are honourable men:
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,
Than I will wrong such honourable men.
But here's a parchment with the seal of Cæsar;
I found it in his closet; 't is his will:
Let but the commons hear this testament —
Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read —

114 *dear abide it*] suffer bitterly the consequences of. Cf. III, i, 95, *supra*.
120 *none so poor . . . reverence*] not the humblest or meanest man is now willing to show him respect.

And they would go and kiss dead Cæsar's wounds
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,
And, dying, mention it within their wills,
Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
Unto their issue.

FOURTH CIT. We'll hear the will: read it, Mark Antony.

ALL. The will, the will! we will hear Cæsar's will.

ANT. Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it;
It is not meet you know how Cæsar loved you.
You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;
And, being men, hearing the will of Cæsar,
It will inflame you, it will make you mad:
'T is good you know not that you are his heirs;
For if you should, O, what would come of it!

FOURTH CIT. Read the will; we'll hear it, Antony;
You shall read us the will, Cæsar's will.

ANT. Will you be patient? will you stay awhile?
I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it:
I fear I wrong the honourable men
Whose daggers have stabb'd Cæsar; I do fear it.

FOURTH CIT. They were traitors: honourable men!

ALL. The will! the testament!

SEC. CIT. They were villains, murderers: the will! read the will.

ANT. You will compel me then to read the will?

---

133 *napkins*] handkerchiefs.

150 *o'ershot myself*] gone beyond my intention.

Then make a ring about the corpse of Cæsar,
And let me show you him that made the will.
Shall I descend? and will you give me leave?
ALL. Come down.
SEC. CIT. Descend. [*He comes down from the pulpit.*
THIRD CIT. You shall have leave.
FOURTH CIT. A ring; stand round.
FIRST CIT. Stand from the hearse, stand from the body.
SEC. CIT. Room for Antony, most noble Antony.
ANT. Nay, press not so upon me; stand far off.
ALL. Stand back. Room! Bear back.
ANT. If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Cæsar put it on;
'T was on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii:
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Cæsar follow'd it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no:
For Brutus, as you know, was Cæsar's angel:

173 *Nervii*] a warlike tribe, whom Cæsar defeated in his second campaign in Gaul in the summer of 57 B. C. Cæsar fully describes the exploit in his *Commentaries*

175 *envious*] malicious.

179 *to be resolved*] to learn for certain.

181 *angel*] good genius or dearest friend. There may be a faint allusion

Judge, O you gods, how dearly Cæsar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statuë,
Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.
O, now you weep, and I perceive you feel
The dint of pity: these are gracious drops.
Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold
Our Cæsar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

FIRST CIT. O piteous spectacle!

SEC. CIT. O noble Cæsar!

THIRD CIT. O woful day!

FOURTH CIT. O traitors, villains!

FIRST CIT. O most bloody sight!

SEC. CIT. We will be revenged.

---

to the Greek belief that a man was attended through life by a protecting genius or "daemon," already mentioned, II, i, 66, *supra*. But "angel" was not uncommonly used as a term of endearment, denoting affectionate intimacy. Cf. *Sonnet* CXLIV, 1–3: "Two loves I have of comfort and despair, . . . The better *angel* is a man right fair."

188 *statuë*] See note on II, ii, 76, *supra*, and cf. III, i, 116, and note.

194 *dint*] stroke or impression.

197 *marr'd . . . with*] defaced by. Cf. *M. Wives*, III, v, 97: "detected *with* (*i. e.*, by) a . . . bell-wether."

ALL. Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live!

ANT. Stay, countrymen.

FIRST CIT. Peace there! hear the noble Antony.

SEC. CIT. We'll hear him, we'll follow him, we'll die with him.

ANT. Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
To such a sudden flood of mutiny.
They that have done this deed are honourable;
What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,
That made them do it: they are wise and honourable,
And will, no doubt, with reasons answer you.
I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts:
I am no orator, as Brutus is;
But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,
That love my friend; and that they know full well
That gave me public leave to speak of him:
For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,

204–205 ALL. *Revenge! . . . live*] The Folios make these words a continuation of the second citizen's speech. The Cambridge editors first assigned them to the general body of citizens.

About] Move on, get to work.

208–209 SEC. CIT. *We'll . . . with him*] The Folios assign this speech to the second citizen. But it would be better to allot it to the general body, like 204–205, *supra*.

213 *private griefs*] personal grievances.

221 *wit*] knowledge, skill. The Second Folio's correction of the First Folio reading *writ*, which Johnson retained, and interpreted as "penned or premeditated oration."

To stir men's blood: I only speak right on;
I tell you that which you yourselves do know;
Show you sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me: but were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue
In every wound of Cæsar, that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.

ALL. We'll mutiny.

FIRST CIT. We'll burn the house of Brutus.

THIRD CIT. Away, then! come, seek the conspirators.

ANT. Yet hear me, countrymen; yet hear me speak.

ALL. Peace, ho! Hear Antony. Most noble Antony!

ANT. Why, friends, you go to do you know not what:
Wherein hath Cæsar thus deserved your loves?
Alas, you know not; I must tell you then:
You have forgot the will I told you of.

ALL. Most true: the will! Let's stay and hear the will.

ANT. Here is the will, and under Cæsar's seal.
To every Roman citizen he gives,
To every several man, seventy five drachmas.

SEC. CIT. Most noble Cæsar! we'll revenge his death.

THIRD CIT. O royal Cæsar!

243 *several*] single, individual.

drachmas] Cæsar left each Roman citizen 300 sesterces, which was the Roman coin commonly used in calculation. Shakespeare follows Plutarch in estimating the amount in Greek currency. A drachma was worth about 9 pence, or 18 cents, so that 75 drachmas were equivalent to about £2 16.0, or 14 dollars.

ANT. Hear me with patience.
ALL. Peace, ho!
ANT. Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,
His private arbours and new-planted orchards,
On this side Tiber; he hath left them you,
And to your heirs for ever; common pleasures,
To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.
Here was a Cæsar! when comes such another?
FIRST CIT. Never, never. Come, away, away!
We'll burn his body in the holy place,
And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.
Take up the body.
SEC. CIT. Go fetch fire.
THIRD CIT. Pluck down benches.
FOURTH CIT. Pluck down forms, windows, any thing.
[*Exeunt Citizens with the body.*
ANT. Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,
Take thou what course thou wilt.

Enter a Servant

How now, fellow!
SERV. Sir, Octavius is already come to Rome.
ANT. Where is he?
SERV. He and Lepidus are at Cæsar's house.
ANT. And thither will I straight to visit him:
He comes upon a wish. Fortune is merry,
And in this mood will give us any thing.

250 *On this side Tiber*] North has here drawn Shakespeare into error. Cæsar's gardens lay on the other side of the Tiber, on the opposite bank to that on which lay the Forum of the city. Cf. *Hor. Sat.*, I, ix, 18: "Trans Tiberim longe cubat is, *prope Cæsaris hortos.*"

251 *common pleasures*] public pleasure grounds.

SERV. I heard him say, Brutus and Cassius
Are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome.
ANT. Belike they had some notice of the people,
How I had moved them. Bring me to Octavius.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III — A STREET

Enter CINNA *the poet*

CIN. I dreamt to-night that I did feast with Cæsar,
And things unluckily charge my fantasy:
I have no will to wander forth of doors,
Yet something leads me forth.

Enter Citizens

FIRST CIT. What is your name?
SEC. CIT. Whither are you going?
THIRD CIT. Where do you dwell?
FOURTH CIT. Are you a married man or a bachelor?
SEC. CIT. Answer every man directly.
FIRST CIT. Ay, and briefly.
FOURTH CIT. Ay, and wisely.
THIRD CIT. Ay, and truly, you were best.
CIN. What is my name? Whither am I going? Where do I dwell? Am I a married man or a bachelor? Then, to answer every man directly and briefly, wisely and truly: wisely I say, I am a bachelor.
SEC. CIT. That's as much as to say, they are fools

270 *Are rid*] Have ridden.
2 *things . . . fantasy*] circumstances oppress my imagination with evil omens.
12 *you were best*] it would be best for you.

that marry: you'll bear me a bang for that, I fear. Proceed; directly.

CIN. Directly, I am going to Cæsar's funeral.

FIRST CIT. As a friend or an enemy?

CIN. As a friend.

SEC. CIT. That matter is answered directly.

FOURTH CIT. For your dwelling, briefly.

CIN. Briefly, I dwell by the Capitol.

THIRD CIT. Your name, sir, truly.

CIN. Truly, my name is Cinna.

FIRST CIT. Tear him to pieces; he's a conspirator.

CIN. I am Cinna the poet, I am Cinna the poet.

FOURTH CIT. Tear him for his bad verses, tear him for his bad verses.

CIN. I am not Cinna the conspirator.

FOURTH CIT. It is no matter, his name's Cinna; pluck but his name out of his heart, and turn him going.

THIRD CIT. Tear him, tear him! Come, brands, ho! fire-brands: to Brutus', to Cassius'; burn all: some to Decius' house, and some to Casca's; some to Ligarius': away, go! [*Exeunt.*

18 *you'll bear me a bang for that*] you'll come in for a blow from me for that jest.

ACT FOURTH — SCENE I

A HOUSE IN ROME

ANTONY, OCTAVIUS, *and* LEPIDUS, *seated at a table*

ANTONY

THESE MANY THEN SHALL die; their names are prick'd.

OCT. Your brother too must die; consent you, Lepidus?

LEP. I do consent —

OCT. Prick him down, Antony.

LEP. Upon condition Publius shall not live,
Who is your sister's son, Mark Antony.

ANT. He shall not live; look, with a spot I damn him.
But, Lepidus, go you to Cæsar's house;
Fetch the will hither, and we shall determine
How to cut off some charge in legacies.

(stage direction) *A house in Rome*] The Folio lacks as usual any indication as to where the scene takes place. But line 11, *infra*, clearly shows it Shakespeare's intention to locate it in Rome. Plutarch makes the triumvirs meet "in an island environed round about with a river."

LEP. What, shall I find you here?
OCT. Or here, or at the Capitol. [*Exit Lepidus.*
ANT. This is a slight unmeritable man,
Meet to be sent on errands: is it fit,
The three-fold world divided, he should stand
One of the three to share it?
OCT. So you thought him,
And took his voice who should be prick'd to die
In our black sentence and proscription.
ANT. Octavius, I have seen more days than you:
And though we lay these honours on this man,
To ease ourselves of divers slanderous loads,
He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold,
To groan and sweat under the business,
Either led or driven, as we point the way;
And having brought our treasure where we will,
Then take we down his load and turn him off,
Like to the empty ass, to shake his ears
And graze in commons.

1 *prick'd*] put on the list, enrolled. Cf. III, i, 217, *supra.*

4–5 *Publius . . . your sister's son*] Shakespeare seems to have made some error here. Plutarch only mentions in this connection Lucius Cæsar, Antony's "uncle by his mother," Julia.

6 *with a spot I damn him*] with a black mark I condemn him.

12 *slight unmeritable*] insignificant, undeserving Cf. IV, iii, 37, *infra.*

14 *The three-fold world*] Cf. *K. John*, V, vii, 116: "the three corners of the world," and *Ant. and Cleop.*, IV, vi, 6: "the three-nook'd world." There is reference in each case to the division of the world into the three known continents — Europe, Asia, and Africa. The world's triplicity makes it appropriate spoil for a triumvirate.

26 *shake his ears*] Cf. *Tw. Night*, II, iii, 118: "Go *shake your ears*" (*i. e.*, "good riddance to you").

OCT. You may do your will:
But he's a tried and valiant soldier.
ANT. So is my horse, Octavius, and for that
I do appoint him store of provender:
It is a creature that I teach to fight,
To wind, to stop, to run directly on,
His corporal motion govern'd by my spirit.
And, in some taste, is Lepidus but so;
He must be taught, and train'd, and bid go forth;
A barren-spirited fellow; one that feeds
On abjects, orts and imitations,
Which, out of use and staled by other men,
Begin his fashion: do not talk of him
But as a property. And now, Octavius,

32 *wind . . . directly on*] turn . . . straight on.

34 *in some taste*] in some slight degree.

37 *abjects, orts*] Thus the Cambridge editors. The Folios read *Obiects, Arts*. Theobald substituted *abject orts, i. e.*, things flung away as useless, rejected scraps, refuse. For "orts" in this sense, cf. *Lucrece*, 985: "a beggar's *orts*." There is no authority for "abjects" as used in the present text; that word is applied to forlorn and forsaken persons (cf. *Rich. III*, I, i, 106: "We are the queen's *abjects*," and *Psalms*, xxxv, 15: "the *abjects* gathered themselves together"), but nowhere is it used of things. Some retain the Folio reading and explain "Objects" as contemptible or hideous things, and "Arts" as "fantastic tricks." These are possible, but far-fetched meanings of the words. Theobald's change on the whole merits acceptance. "Imitations" means "mere echoes or shadows of the genuine thing."

38 *staled*] worn out, rendered obsolete.

39 *Begin his fashion*] Form the starting-point of fashion for him. Cf. *2 Hen. IV*, III, ii, 307: Falstaff says of Shallow that he "came ever *in the rearward of the fashion*."

40 *a property*] a theatrical property, a mere tool.

Listen great things: Brutus and Cassius
Are levying powers: we must straight make head:
Therefore let our alliance be combined,
Our best friends made, our means stretch'd;
And let us presently go sit in council,
How covert matters may be best disclosed,
And open perils surest answered.

OCT. Let us do so: for we are at the stake,
And bay'd about with many enemies;
And some that smile have in their hearts, I fear,
Millions of mischiefs. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — CAMP NEAR SARDIS

BEFORE BRUTUS'S TENT

Drum. Enter BRUTUS, LUCILIUS, LUCIUS, *and* Soldiers; TITINIUS *and* PINDARUS *meet them*

BRU. Stand, ho!

LUCIL. Give the word, ho! and stand.

BRU. What now, Lucilius! is Cassius near?

LUCIL. He is at hand; and Pindarus is come
To do you salutation from his master.

BRU. He greets me well. Your master, Pindarus,
In his own change, or by ill officers,

42 *make head*] raise an army.

48–49 *at the stake, And bay'd about*] like a bear tied to a stake in the sport of bear-baiting, and barked at by a pack of dogs.

1 *Stand, ho*] As a matter of history a year intervenes between the events of this and the preceding scene.

7 *In his own change . . . officers*] Because of some change of mind on his own part or failure of duty on the part of his officers.

Hath given me some worthy cause to wish
Things done undone: but if he be at hand,
I shall be satisfied.
PIN. I do not doubt
But that my noble master will appear
Such as he is, full of regard and honour.
BRU. He is not doubted. A word, Lucilius,
How he received you: let me be resolved.
LUCIL. With courtesy and with respect enough;
But not with such familiar instances,
Nor with such free and friendly conference,
As he hath used of old.
BRU. Thou hast described
A hot friend cooling: ever note, Lucilius,
When love begins to sicken and decay,
It useth an enforced ceremony.
There are no tricks in plain and simple faith:
But hollow men, like horses hot at hand,
Make gallant show and promise of their mettle;
But when they should endure the bloody spur,
They fall their crests and like deceitful jades
Sink in the trial. Comes his army on?
LUCIL. They mean this night in Sardis to be quarter'd;

16 *familiar instances*] marks of familiarity.
23 *hollow men . . . hot at hand*] insincere men, like impetuous horses under restraint of the rein.
26 *fall their crests*] let fall, lower, their crests; a sign of want of spirit in a horse.
deceitful jades] horses not to be trusted. Cf. *T. of Shrew*, I, ii, 245: "he'll prove a *jade*."

The greater part, the horse in general,
Are come with Cassius. [*Low march within.*
BRU. Hark! he is arrived:
March gently on to meet him.

Enter CASSIUS *and his powers*

CAS. Stand, ho!
BRU. Stand, ho! Speak the word along.
FIRST SOL. Stand!
SEC. SOL. Stand!
THIRD SOL. Stand!
CAS. Most noble brother, you have done me wrong.
BRU. Judge me, you gods! wrong I mine enemies?
And, if not so, how should I wrong a brother?
CAS. Brutus, this sober form of yours hides wrongs;
And when you do them —
BRU. Cassius, be content;
Speak your griefs softly: I do know you well.
Before the eyes of both our armies here,
Which should perceive nothing but love from us,
Let us not wrangle: bid them move away;
Then in my tent, Cassius, enlarge your griefs,
And I will give you audience.
CAS. Pindarus,
Bid our commanders lead their charges off
A little from this ground.

---

42 *griefs*] grievances.
46 *enlarge your griefs*] set out in full your grievances.
48 *their charges*] the troops under their command.

BRU. Lucilius, do you the like, and let no man
Come to our tent till we have done our conference.
Let Lucius and Titinius guard our door. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III — BRUTUS'S TENT

Enter BRUTUS *and* CASSIUS

CAS. That you have wrong'd me doth appear in this:
You have condemn'd and noted Lucius Pella
For taking bribes here of the Sardians;
Wherein my letters, praying on his side,
Because I knew the man, were slighted off.
BRU. You wrong'd yourself to write in such a case.
CAS. In such a time as this it is not meet
That every nice offence should bear his comment.
BRU. Let me tell you, Cassius, you yourself
Are much condemn'd to have an itching palm,
To sell and mart your offices for gold
To undeservers.
CAS. I an itching palm!

50–52 *Lucilius . . . Lucius*] Thus the Folio. But Craik was doubtless right in transposing these names. Thereby he regularised the metre of the first line, and appointed functions for Lucilius and Lucius, which alone harmonise with the coming scene. From IV, iii, 125, *infra*, it is clear that Lucilius not Lucius is guarding the door, an office which better befits an adult soldier of rank than a page-boy like Lucius. Moreover Titinius is one of Brutus's trusted officers, with whom it is very improbable that the page-boy would be associated in an important duty.

2 *noted*] disgraced, stigmatised.

5 *slighted off*] disregarded.

8 *every nice . . . comment*] every petty offence should be scrutinised.

You know that you are Brutus that speaks this,
Or, by the gods, this speech were else your last.
BRU. The name of Cassius honours this corruption,
And chastisement doth therefore hide his head.
CAS. Chastisement!
BRU. Remember March, the ides of March remember:
Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
What villain touch'd his body, that did stab,
And not for justice? What, shall one of us,
That struck the foremost man of all this world
But for supporting robbers, shall we now
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
And sell the mighty space of our large honours
For so much trash as may be grasped thus?
I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,
Than such a Roman.
CAS. Brutus, bait not me;
I'll not endure it: you forget yourself,
To hedge me in; I am a soldier, I,
Older in practice, abler than yourself
To make conditions.
BRU. Go to; you are not, Cassius.
CAS. I am.
BRU. I say you are not.

---

28 *bait*] Thus the Folios. Theobald unnecessarily substituted *bay*.
30 *To hedge me in*] To limit my authority.
32 *To make conditions*] To decide the terms on which offices are to be conferred.

CAS. Urge me no more, I shall forget myself;
Have mind upon your health, tempt me no farther.
BRU. Away, slight man!
CAS. Is 't possible?
BRU. Hear me, for I will speak.
Must I give way and room to your rash choler?
Shall I be frighted when a madman stares?
CAS. O ye gods, ye gods! must I endure all this?
BRU. All this! ay, more: fret till your proud heart break;
Go show your slaves how choleric you are,
And make your bondmen tremble. Must I budge?
Must I observe you? must I stand and crouch
Under your testy humour? By the gods,
You shall digest the venom of your spleen,
Though it do split you; for, from this day forth,
I'll use you for my mirth, yea, for my laughter,
When you are waspish.
CAS. Is it come to this?
BRU. You say you are a better soldier:
Let it appear so; make your vaunting true,
And it shall please me well: for mine own part,
I shall be glad to learn of noble men.
CAS. You wrong me every way; you wrong me, Brutus;
I said, an elder soldier, not a better:
Did I say, better?

35 *Urge*] Worry, exasperate.
37 *slight*] insignificant, as in IV, i, 12, *supra:* "*slight* unmeritable man."
44 *budge*] give place to you.
45 *observe you*] be obsequious to you, defer to you.

BRU. If you did, I care not.
CAS. When Cæsar lived, he durst not thus have moved me.
BRU. Peace, peace! you durst not so have tempted him.
CAS. I durst not!
BRU. No.
CAS. What, durst not tempt him!
BRU. For your life you durst not.
CAS. Do not presume too much upon my love;
I may do that I shall be sorry for.
BRU. You have done that you should be sorry for.
There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats;
For I am arm'd so strong in honesty,
That they pass by me as the idle wind
Which I respect not. I did send to you
For certain sums of gold, which you denied me:
For I can raise no money by vile means:
By heaven, I had rather coin my heart,
And drop my blood for drachmas, than to wring
From the hard hands of peasants their vile trash
By any indirection. I did send
To you for gold to pay my legions,
Which you denied me: was that done like Cassius?
Should I have answer'd Caius Cassius so?
When Marcus Brutus grows so covetous,
To lock such rascal counters from his friends,

73 *drachmas*] See note on III, ii, 243, *supra*.
75 *indirection*] dishonesty.
80 *To lock such rascal counters*] As to withhold such worthless pieces of money.

Be ready, gods, with all your thunderbolts,
Dash him to pieces!
CAS. I denied you not.
BRU. You did.
CAS. I did not: he was but a fool
That brought my answer back. Brutus hath rived my heart:
A friend should bear his friend's infirmities,
But Brutus makes mine greater than they are.
BRU. I do not, till you practise them on me.
CAS. You love me not.
BRU. I do not like your faults.
CAS. A friendly eye could never see such faults.
BRU. A flatterer's would not, though they do appear
As huge as high Olympus.
CAS. Come, Antony, and young Octavius, come,
Revenge yourselves alone on Cassius,
For Cassius is aweary of the world;
Hated by one he loves; braved by his brother;
Check'd like a bondman; all his faults observed,
Set in a note-book, learn'd and conn'd by rote,
To cast into my teeth. O, I could weep
My spirit from mine eyes! There is my dagger,
And here my naked breast; within, a heart
Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold:
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth;

101 *Plutus'*] Pope's correction of the Folio reading *Pluto's*. Cf. *Tim. of Athens*, I, i, 278: "*Plutus*, the god of gold."

102 *If . . . take it forth*] Cf. 185, *infra*: "Now, *as you are a Roman*, tell me true."

I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart:
Strike, as thou didst at Cæsar; for I know,
When thou didst hate him worst, thou lovedst him better
Than ever thou lovedst Cassius.

BRU. Sheathe your dagger:
Be angry when you will, it shall have scope;
Do what you will, dishonour shall be humour.
O Cassius, you are yoked with a lamb,
That carries anger as the flint bears fire,
Who, much enforced, shows a hasty spark
And straight is cold again.

CAS. Hath Cassius lived
To be but mirth and laughter to his Brutus,
When grief and blood ill-temper'd vexeth him?

BRU. When I spoke that, I was ill-temper'd too.

CAS. Do you confess so much? Give me your hand.

BRU. And my heart too.

CAS. O Brutus!

BRU. What's the matter?

CAS. Have not you love enough to bear with me,
When that rash humour which my mother gave me
Makes me forgetful?

BRU. Yes, Cassius, and from henceforth,
When you are over-earnest with your Brutus,
He'll think your mother chides, and leave you so.

POET. [*Within.*] Let me go in to see the generals;

108 *Do . . . humour*] Whatever dishonourable thing you may do, I will set it down to the whim or caprice of the moment.

There is some grudge between 'em; 't is not meet
They be alone.

LUCIL. [*Within.*] You shall not come to them.

POET. [*Within.*] Nothing but death shall stay me.

Enter Poet, *followed by* LUCILIUS, TITINIUS, *and* LUCIUS

CAS. How now! what's the matter?

POET. For shame, you generals! what do you mean?
Love, and be friends, as two such men should be;
For I have seen more years, I'm sure, than ye.

CAS. Ha, ha! how vilely doth this cynic rhyme!

BRU. Get you hence, sirrah; saucy fellow, hence!

CAS. Bear with him, Brutus; 't is his fashion.

BRU. I'll know his humour when he knows his time:
What should the wars do with these jigging fools?
Companion, hence!

CAS. Away, away, be gone! [*Exit Poet.*

BRU. Lucilius and Titinius, bid the commanders
Prepare to lodge their companies to-night.

CAS. And come yourselves, and bring Messala with you
Immediately to us. [*Exeunt Lucilius and Titinius.*

129–130 *Love, and be friends, . . . than ye*] This distich comes with little change direct from Plutarch, who mentions that it is what "old Nestor said in Homer." Plutarch makes the intruder a "hot, hasty man," named Phaonius, who professed extravagant devotion to the cynic philosophy.

131 *this cynic*] according to Plutarch, Brutus called the intruder "dog and counterfeit *cynic*."

135 *jigging*] often used of doggerel rhyming, as well as of dancing.

136 *Companion*] Fellow. The word was often used contemptuously.

BRU. Lucius, a bowl of wine! [*Exit Lucius.*
CAS. I did not think you could have been so angry.
BRU. O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.
CAS. Of your philosophy you make no use,
If you give place to accidental evils.
BRU. No man bears sorrow better: Portia is dead.
CAS. Ha! Portia!
BRU. She is dead.
CAS. How 'scaped I killing when I cross'd you so?
O insupportable and touching loss!
Upon what sickness?
BRU. Impatient of my absence,
And grief that young Octavius with Mark Antony
Have made themselves so strong: for with her death
That tidings came: with this she fell distract,
And, her attendants absent, swallow'd fire.
CAS. And died so?
BRU. Even so.
CAS. O ye immortal gods!

Re-enter LUCIUS, *with wine and taper*

BRU. Speak no more of her. Give me a bowl of wine.
In this I bury all unkindness, Cassius. [*Drinks.*
CAS. My heart is thirsty for that noble pledge.
Fill, Lucius, till the wine o'erswell the cup;
I cannot drink too much of Brutus' love. [*Drinks.*
BRU. Come in, Titinius! [*Exit Lucius.*

---

154 *swallow'd fire*] According to Plutarch, Portia put hot burning coals in her mouth, and then kept her lips closed till she choked.

Re-enter TITINIUS, *with* MESSALA

Welcome, good Messala.
Now sit we close about this taper here,
And call in question our necessities.
CAS. Portia, art thou gone?
BRU. No more, I pray you.
Messala, I have here received letters,
That young Octavius and Mark Antony
Come down upon us with a mighty power,
Bending their expedition toward Philippi.
MES. Myself have letters of the selfsame tenour.
BRU. With what addition? 170
MES. That by proscription and bills of outlawry
Octavius, Antony and Lepidus,
Have put to death an hundred senators.
BRU. Therein our letters do not well agree;
Mine speak of seventy senators that died
By their proscriptions, Cicero being one.
CAS. Cicero one!
MES. Cicero is dead,
And by that order of proscription.
Had you your letters from your wife, my lord?
BRU. No, Messala. 180
MES. Nor nothing in your letters writ of her?
BRU. Nothing, Messala.
MES. That, methinks, is strange.
BRU. Why ask you? hear you ought of her in yours?
MES. No, my lord.
BRU. Now, as you are a Roman, tell me true.

MES. Then like a Roman bear the truth I tell:
For certain she is dead, and by strange manner.
BRU. Why, farewell, Portia. We must die, Messala:
With meditating that she must die once
I have the patience to endure it now.
MES. Even so great men great losses should endure.
CAS. I have as much of this in art as you,
But yet my nature could not bear it so.
BRU. Well, to our work alive. What do you think
Of marching to Philippi presently?
CAS. I do not think it good.
BRU. Your reason?
CAS. This it is:
'T is better that the enemy seek us:
So shall he waste his means, weary his soldiers,
Doing himself offence; whilst we lying still
Are full of rest, defence and nimbleness.
BRU. Good reasons must of force give place to better.
The people 'twixt Philippi and this ground
Do stand but in a forced affection,
For they have grudged us contribution:
The enemy, marching along by them,
By them shall make a fuller number up,
Come on refresh'd, new-added and encouraged;
From which advantage shall we cut him off
If at Philippi we do face him there,
These people at our back.

192 *in art*] in theory.
199 *offence*] harm, injury.
207 *new-added*] re-inforced. Capell first hyphened the words.

CAS. Hear me, good brother.
BRU. Under your pardon. You must note beside
That we have tried the utmost of our friends,
Our legions are brim-full, our cause is ripe:
The enemy increaseth every day;
We, at the height, are ready to decline.
There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.
CAS. Then, with your will, go on;
We'll along ourselves and meet them at Philippi.
BRU. The deep of night is crept upon our talk,
And nature must obey necessity;
Which we will niggard with a little rest.
There is no more to say?
CAS. No more. Good-night:
Early to-morrow will we rise and hence.
BRU. Lucius! [*Re-enter Lucius.*] My gown. [*Exit Lucius.*]
Farewell, good Messala:
Good night, Titinius: noble, noble Cassius,
Good night, and good repose.
CAS. O my dear brother!
This was an ill beginning of the night:

218 *Omitted*] Neglected.

226 *niggard*] satisfy sparingly. The word is used both as a transitive and an intransitive verb. Cf. *Sonnet* i, 12: "makest waste in *niggarding* (*i. e.*, playing the miser)."

Never come such division 'tween our souls!
Let it not, Brutus.
BRU. Every thing is well.
CAS. Good night, my lord.
BRU. Good night, good brother.
TIT. MES. Good night, Lord Brutus.
BRU. Farewell, every one.
[*Exeunt all but Brutus.*

Re-enter LUCIUS, *with the gown*

Give me the gown. Where is thy instrument?
LUC. Here in the tent.
BRU. What, thou speak'st drowsily?
Poor knave, I blame thee not; thou art o'er-watch'd.
Call Claudius and some other of my men;
I'll have them sleep on cushions in my tent.
LUC. Varro and Claudius!

Enter VARRO *and* CLAUDIUS

VAR. Calls my lord?
BRU. I pray you, sirs, lie in my tent and sleep;
It may be I shall raise you by and by
On business to my brother Cassius.
VAR. So please you, we will stand and watch your pleasure.
BRU. I will not have it so: lie down, good sirs;
It may be I shall otherwise bethink me.
Look, Lucius, here's the book I sought for so;
I put it in the pocket of my gown.
[*Var. and Clau. lie down.*

239 *Poor knave*] Poor lad.
o'er-watch'd] wearied for want of sleep.

LUC. I was sure your lordship did not give it me.
BRU. Bear with me, good boy, I am much forgetful.
Canst thou hold up thy heavy eyes awhile,
And touch thy instrument a strain or two?
LUC. Ay, my lord, an 't please you.
BRU. It does, my boy:
I trouble thee too much, but thou art willing.
LUC. It is my duty, sir.
BRU. I should not urge thy duty past thy might;
I know young bloods look for a time of rest.
LUC. I have slept, my lord, already.
BRU. It was well done; and thou shalt sleep again;
I will not hold thee long: if I do live,
I will be good to thee. [*Music, and a song.*
This is a sleepy tune. O murderous slumber,
Lay'st thou thy leaden mace upon my boy,
That plays thee music? Gentle knave, good night;
I will not do thee so much wrong to wake thee:
If thou dost nod, thou break'st thy instrument;
I'll take it from thee; and, good boy, good night.
Let me see, let me see; is not the leaf turn'd down
Where I left reading? Here it is, I think. [*Sits down.*

Enter the Ghost of CÆSAR

How ill this taper burns! Ha! who comes here?
I think it is the weakness of mine eyes
That shapes this monstrous apparition.
It comes upon me. Art thou any thing?
Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,

266 *mace*] sceptre.

That makest my blood cold, and my hair to stare?
Speak to me what thou art.

GHOST. Thy evil spirit, Brutus.

BRU. Why comest thou?

GHOST. To tell thee thou shalt see me at Philippi.

BRU. Well; then I shall see thee again?

GHOST. Ay, at Philippi.

BRU. Why, I will see thee at Philippi then. [*Exit Ghost.*
Now I have taken heart thou vanishest.
Ill spirit, I would hold more talk with thee.
Boy, Lucius! Varro! Claudius! Sirs awake!
Claudius!

LUC. The strings, my lord, are false.

BRU. He thinks he still is at his instrument.
Lucius, awake!

LUC. My lord?

BRU. Didst thou dream, Lucius, that thou so criedst out?

LUC. My lord, I do not know that I did cry.

BRU. Yes, that thou didst: didst thou see any thing?

LUC. Nothing, my lord.

BRU. Sleep again, Lucius. Sirrah Claudius!
[*To Var.*] Fellow thou, awake!

VAR. My lord?

CLAU. My lord?

BRU. Why did you so cry out, sirs, in your sleep?

278 *stare*] stand on end.

280 *Thy evil spirit*] In Plutarch the ghost is only described as "Brutus's evil spirit." Shakespeare first denominated the apparition "the ghost of Cæsar."

VAR. CLAU. Did we, my lord?
BRU. Ay: saw you any thing?
VAR. No, my lord, I saw nothing.
CLAU. Nor I, my lord.
BRU. Go and commend me to my brother Cassius;
Bid him set on his powers betimes before,
And we will follow.
VAR. CLAU. It shall be done, my lord. [*Exeunt.*

ACT FIFTH — SCENE I

THE PLAINS OF PHILIPPI

Enter OCTAVIUS, ANTONY, *and their army*

OCTAVIUS

NOW, ANTONY, OUR HOPES are answered:
You said the enemy would not come down,
But keep the hills and upper regions;
It proves not so: their battles are at hand;
They mean to warn us at Philippi here,
Answering before we do demand of them.

ANT. Tut, I am in their bosoms, and I know
Wherefore they do it: they could be content
To visit other places; and come down

4 *battles*] battalions, forces, army. Cf. line 16, *infra*.
5 *warn us*] challenge us, summon us (to battle).
8 *content*] glad.

With fearful bravery, thinking by this face
To fasten in our thoughts that they have courage;
But 't is not so.

Enter a Messenger

MESS. Prepare you, generals:
The enemy comes on in gallant show;
Their bloody sign of battle is hung out,
And something to be done immediately.

ANT. Octavius, lead your battle softly on,
Upon the left hand of the even field.

OCT. Upon the right hand I; keep thou the left.

ANT. Why do you cross me in this exigent?

OCT. I do not cross you; but I will do so. [*March.*

Drum. Enter BRUTUS, CASSIUS, *and their* Army; LUCILIUS, TITINIUS, MESSALA, *and others*

BRU. They stand, and would have parley.

CAS. Stand fast, Titinius: we must out and talk.

OCT. Mark Antony, shall we give sign of battle?

ANT. No, Cæsar, we will answer on their charge.
Make forth; the generals would have some words.

---

10 *fearful bravery*] timid show of courage.

14 *Their bloody sign . . . out*] According to Plutarch, the "signal of battle" in Brutus's and Cassius's camp was "an arming *scarlet* coat."

19 *exigent*] emergency.

20 *I do not . . . do so*] I have no wish to thwart you, but I will have my way. The youthful Octavius shows here a petulant obstinacy, which throws dramatic light on his character. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, II, ii, 15 *seq.*

24 *answer on their charge*] meet them when they charge.

OCT. Stir not until the signal.
BRU. Words before blows: is it so, countrymen?
OCT. Not that we love words better, as you do.
BRU. Good words are better than bad strokes, Octavius.
ANT. In your bad strokes, Brutus, you give good words:
Witness the hole you made in Cæsar's heart,
Crying "Long live! hail, Cæsar!"
CAS. Antony,
The posture of your blows are yet unknown;
But for your words, they rob the Hybla bees,
And leave them honeyless.
ANT. Not stingless too.
BRU. O, yes, and soundless too;
For you have stol'n their buzzing, Antony,
And very wisely threat before you sting.
ANT. Villains, you did not so, when your vile daggers
Hack'd one another in the sides of Cæsar:
You show'd your teeth like apes, and fawn'd like hounds,
And bow'd like bondmen, kissing Cæsar's feet;
Whilst damned Casca, like a cur, behind
Struck Cæsar on the neck. O you flatterers!
CAS. Flatterers! Now, Brutus, thank yourself:

33 *The posture . . . unknown*] The manner or management of your attack we do not yet know. The plural verb "are" results from the proximity of "blows," although the singular "posture" is the subject.

34 *the Hybla bees*] Hybla was a town in Sicily celebrated by classical poets for the sweetness of its honey. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, I, ii, 40: "a *most sweet* wench. . . . As the honey of *Hybla*."

This tongue had not offended so to-day,
If Cassius might have ruled.
OCT. Come, come, the cause: if arguing make us sweat,
The proof of it will turn to redder drops.
Look;
I draw a sword against conspirators;
When think you that the sword goes up again?
Never, till Cæsar's three and thirty wounds
Be well avenged, or till another Cæsar
Have added slaughter to the sword of traitors.
BRU. Cæsar, thou canst not die by traitors' hands,
Unless thou bring'st them with thee.
OCT. So I hope;
I was not born to die on Brutus' sword.
BRU. O, if thou wert the noblest of thy strain,
Young man, thou couldst not die more honourable.
CAS. A peevish schoolboy, worthless of such honour,
Join'd with a masker and a reveller!
ANT. Old Cassius still!
OCT. Come, Antony; away!
Defiance, traitors, hurl we in your teeth;
If you dare fight to-day, come to the field:
If not, when you have stomachs.

[*Exeunt Octavius, Antony, and their army.*

53 *three and thirty wounds*] the number of Cæsar's wounds were "three and *twenty*" according to classical historians.

54–55 *till another . . . traitors*] till a second Cæsar (*i. e.*, myself) has supplied the sword of you traitors with an additional victim; till you have killed me as you have killed Julius Cæsar.

63 *Old Cassius still*] Cassius is unchanged, as bitter tongued as ever.

66 *stomachs*] inclination.

CAS. Why, now, blow wind, swell billow, and swim bark!
The storm is up, and all is on the hazard.
BRU. Ho, Lucilius! hark, a word with you.
LUCIL. [*Standing forth*] My lord?

[*Brutus and Lucilius converse apart.*

CAS. Messala!
MES. [*Standing forth*] What says my general?
CAS. Messala,
This is my birth-day; as this very day
Was Cassius born. Give me thy hand, Messala:
Be thou my witness that, against my will,
As Pompey was, am I compell'd to set
Upon one battle all our liberties.
You know that I held Epicurus strong,
And his opinion: now I change my mind,
And partly credit things that do presage.
Coming from Sardis, on our former ensign
Two mighty eagles fell, and there they perch'd,
Gorging and feeding from our soldiers' hands;
Who to Philippi here consorted us:

71 *as this very day*] on this very day as is; "as" gave emphatic precision to dates.

72–125 *Give me thy hand . . . Come, ho! away!*] Throughout this passage Shakespeare follows with great closeness the language of North's translation of Plutarch.

76–77 *Epicurus . . . And his opinion*] As an Epicurean, Cassius had discredited reliance on omens, faith in which was strongly held by the opposing sect of the Stoics.

79 *our former ensign*] our foremost ensign. North in the corresponding passage has "two of the *foremost* ensigns."

82 *to Philippi . . . us*] accompanied us to Philippi.

This morning are they fled away and gone;
And in their steads do ravens, crows and kites
Fly o'er our heads and downward look on us,
As we were sickly prey: their shadows seem
A canopy most fatal, under which
Our army lies, ready to give up the ghost.
MES. Believe not so.
CAS. I but believe it partly,
For I am fresh of spirit and resolved
To meet all perils very constantly.
BRU. Even so, Lucilius.
CAS. Now, most noble Brutus,
The gods to-day stand friendly, that we may,
Lovers in peace, lead on our days to age!
But, since the affairs of men rest still incertain,
Let's reason with the worst that may befall.
If we do lose this battle, then is this
The very last time we shall speak together:
What are you then determined to do?
BRU. Even by the rule of that philosophy
By which I did blame Cato for the death
Which he did give himself: I know not how,

94 *Lovers*] Friends. Cf. III, ii, 13, 44, *supra*.

96 *reason with*] talk of.

101 *Cato*] The Stoic philosopher, who loyally supported Pompey. After the defeat by Cæsar of Pompey's friends at the battle of Thapsus, B. C. 46, Cato committed suicide at Utica, in Africa, spending the preceding night in reading Plato's *Phaedo*. Portia, Brutus's wife, was his daughter (cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, I, i, 166).

102 *Which he did give himself: I know not how*] The punctuation here and in the lines which follow is open to discussion. The Folios put a comma after *himself*, and a colon after *how*, making *I know not how*

But I do find it cowardly and vile,
For fear of what might fall, so to prevent
The time of life: arming myself with patience
To stay the providence of some high powers
That govern us below.

CAS. Then, if we lose this battle,
You are contented to be led in triumph
Thorough the streets of Rome?

BRU. No, Cassius, no: think not, thou noble Roman,
That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome; 111
He bears too great a mind. But this same day
Must end that work the ides of March begun;
And whether we shall meet again I know not.
Therefore our everlasting farewell take.
For ever, and for ever, farewell, Cassius!
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
If not, why then this parting was well made.

CAS. For ever and for ever farewell, Brutus!

---

qualify Brutus's reference to Cato's death, and express uncertainty as to its precise mode. The punctuation in the text is supported by the text of North, where Brutus is made to say "I trust (*I know not how*) a certain rule of philosophy, by the which I did greatly blame and reprove Cato for killing himself . . . but being now in the midst of the danger, I am of a contrary mind."

104–105 *prevent The time of life*] anticipate the normal close of life.

105 *arming myself*] rather would I arm myself.

106 *stay*] await.

110–112 *No, Cassius . . . mind*] Brutus's thought of his inability to escape from disgrace leads him to retract suddenly his declaration against suicide. So, in Plutarch, Brutus, after admitting his disapproval of Cato's act, remarks that if the coming battle be lost he will be quite content to kill himself.

If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed;
If not, 't is true this parting was well made.
BRU. Why then, lead on. O, that a man might know
The end of this day's business ere it come!
But it sufficeth that the day will end,
And then the end is known. Come, ho! away!
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — THE FIELD OF BATTLE

Alarum. Enter BRUTUS *and* MESSALA

BRU. Ride, ride, Messala, ride, and give these bills
Unto the legions on the other side: [*Loud alarum.*
Let them set on at once; for I perceive
But cold demeanour in Octavius' wing,
And sudden push gives them the overthrow.
Ride, ride, Messala: let them all come down. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III — ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD

Alarums. Enter CASSIUS *and* TITINIUS

CAS. O, look, Titinius, look, the villains fly!
Myself have to mine own turn'd enemy:
This ensign here of mine was turning back;
I slew the coward, and did take it from him.

1–2 *bills Unto . . . side*] orders to the legions in reserve on the left wing of the army to advance to the aid of Cassius who was in command of the left wing (cf. *infra*, V, iii, 10 *seq.*).

3–4 *ensign . . . it*] standard-bearer . . . the standard.

TIT. O Cassius, Brutus gave the word too early;
Who, having some advantage on Octavius,
Took it too eagerly: his soldiers fell to spoil,
Whilst we by Antony are all enclosed.

Enter PINDARUS

PIN. Fly further off, my lord, fly further off;
Mark Antony is in your tents, my lord:
Fly, therefore, noble Cassius, fly far off.
CAS. This hill is far enough. Look, look, Titinius;
Are those my tents where I perceive the fire?
TIT. They are, my lord.
CAS. Titinius, if thou lovest me,
Mount thou my horse and hide thy spurs in him,
Till he have brought thee up to yonder troops
And here again; that I may rest assured
Whether yond troops are friend or enemy.
TIT. I will be here again, even with a thought. [*Exit.*
CAS. Go, Pindarus, get higher on that hill;
My sight was ever thick; regard Titinius,
And tell me what thou notest about the field.
[*Pindarus ascends the hill.*
This day I breathed first: time is come round,
And where I did begin, there shall I end;
My life is run his compass. Sirrah, what news?

16 *yonder troops*] the troops which, in the previous scene (ii, *supra*), Brutus has ordered Messala to bring to Cassius' aid.

19 *even with a thought*] quick as thought. The same phrase is found in *Ant. and Cleop.*, IV, xiv, 9.

20 *get higher on that hill*] go higher up the hill. Cassius and Pindarus have already reached the hill, as line 12, *supra*, indicates.

PIN. [*Above*] O my lord!
CAS. What news?
PIN. [*Above*] Titinius is enclosed round about
With horsemen, that make to him on the spur;
Yet he spurs on. Now they are almost on him.
Now, Titinius! Now some light. O, he lights too.
He's ta'en. [*Shout*] And, hark! they shout for joy.
CAS. Come down; behold no more.
O, coward that I am, to live so long,
To see my best friend ta'en before my face!

PINDARUS *descends*

Come hither, sirrah:
In Parthia did I take thee prisoner;
And then I swore thee, saving of thy life,
That whatsoever I did bid thee do,
Thou shouldst attempt it. Come now, keep thine oath;
Now be a freeman; and with this good sword,
That ran through Cæsar's bowels, search this bosom.
Stand not to answer: here, take thou the hilts;
And when my face is covered, as 't is now,
Guide thou the sword. [*Pindarus stabs him.*] Cæsar, thou art revenged,
Even with this sword that kill'd thee. [*Dies.*
PIN. So, I am free; yet would not so have been,
Durst I have done my will. O Cassius!
Far from this country Pindarus shall run,
Where never Roman shall take note of him. [*Exit.*

31 *some light . . . he lights*] some of them alight, dismount . . . he alights.
43 *the hilts*] the handle of the sword; the plural form was in common use.

Re-enter TITINIUS *with* MESSALA

MES. It is but change, Titinius; for Octavius
Is overthrown by noble Brutus' power,
As Cassius' legions are by Antony.
TIT. These tidings will well comfort Cassius.
MES. Where did you leave him?
TIT. All disconsolate,
With Pindarus his bondman, on this hill.
MES. Is not that he that lies upon the ground?
TIT. He lies not like the living. O my heart!
MES. Is not that he?
TIT. No, this was he, Messala,
But Cassius is no more. O setting sun,
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to night,
So in his red blood Cassius' day is set,
The sun of Rome is set! Our day is gone;
Clouds, dews and dangers come; our deeds are done!
Mistrust of my success hath done this deed.
MES. Mistrust of good success hath done this deed.
O hateful error, melancholy's child,
Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men
The things that are not? O error, soon conceived,
Thou never comest unto a happy birth,
But kill'st the mother that engender'd thee!
TIT. What, Pindarus! where art thou, Pindarus?
MES. Seek him, Titinius, whilst I go to meet

51 *It is but change*] There is only an exchange of fortune.
58 *He lies not . . . living*] His posture is not that of a living man.
65 *my success*] the result of my effort.
66 *good success*] a favourable issue.
68 *apt thoughts*] impressionable minds.

The noble Brutus, thrusting this report
Into his ears: I may say "thrusting" it,
For piercing steel and darts envenomed
Shall be as welcome to the ears of Brutus
As tidings of this sight.
TIT. Hie you, Messala,
And I will seek for Pindarus the while. [*Exit Messala.*
Why didst thou send me forth, brave Cassius? 80
Did I not meet thy friends? and did not they
Put on my brows this wreath of victory,
And bid me give it thee? Didst thou not hear their shouts?
Alas, thou hast misconstrued every thing!
But, hold thee, take this garland on thy brow;
Thy Brutus bid me give it thee, and I
Will do his bidding. Brutus, come apace,
And see how I regarded Caius Cassius.
By your leave, gods: this is a Roman's part:
Come, Cassius' sword, and find Titinius' heart. 90
[*Kills himself.*

Alarum. Re-enter MESSALA, *with* BRUTUS, *young* CATO, *and others*

BRU. Where, where, Messala, doth his body lie?
MES. Lo, yonder, and Titinius mourning it.
BRU. Titinius' face is upward.
CATO. He is slain.
BRU. O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet!
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords
In our own proper entrails. [*Low alarums.*

96 *own proper*] very own; an emphatic duplication.

CATO. Brave Titinius!
Look, whether he have not crown'd dead Cassius!
BRU. Are yet two Romans living such as these?
The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!
It is impossible that ever Rome
Should breed thy fellow. Friends, I owe moe tears
To this dead man than you shall see me pay.
I shall find time, Cassius, I shall find time.
Come therefore, and to Thasos send his body:
His funerals shall not be in our camp,
Lest it discomfort us. Lucilius, come,
And come, young Cato: let us to the field.
Labeo and Flavius, set our battles on.
'T is three o'clock; and, Romans, yet ere night
We shall try fortune in a second fight. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV — ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD

Alarum. Enter, fighting, Soldiers *of both armies; then* BRUTUS, *young* CATO, LUCILIUS, *and others*

BRU. Yet, countrymen, O, yet hold up your heads!
CATO. What bastard doth not? Who will go with me?

104 *Thasos*] an island in the Ægean Sea, not far from the battlefield of Philippi, on the mainland of Macedonia.

106 *discomfort*] discourage.

108 *set our battles on*] advance our army.

110 *second fight*] As a matter of history, the second engagement was separated by twenty days from the first. Shakespeare makes them both take place on the same day.

2 *What bastard doth not*] What man is such a dastard as not to do so.

I will proclaim my name about the field.
I am the son of Marcus Cato, ho!
A foe to tyrants, and my country's friend;
I am the son of Marcus Cato, ho!

BRU. And I am Brutus, Marcus Brutus, I;
Brutus, my country's friend; know me for Brutus! [*Exit.*

LUCIL. O young and noble Cato, art thou down?
Why, now thou diest as bravely as Titinius,
And mayst be honour'd, being Cato's son.

FIRST SOLD. Yield, or thou diest.

LUCIL. Only I yield to die:
[*Offering money*] There is so much that thou wilt kill me straight;
Kill Brutus, and be honour'd in his death.

FIRST SOLD. We must not. A noble prisoner!

SEC. SOLD. Room, ho! Tell Antony, Brutus is ta'en.

FIRST SOLD. I'll tell the news. Here comes the general.

Enter ANTONY

Brutus is ta'en, Brutus is ta'en, my lord.

ANT. Where is he?

LUCIL. Safe, Antony; Brutus is safe enough:
I dare assure thee that no enemy
Shall ever take alive the noble Brutus:
The gods defend him from so great a shame!
When you do find him, or alive or dead,
He will be found like Brutus, like himself.

ANT. This is not Brutus, friend, but, I assure you,
A prize no less in worth: keep this man safe,
Give him all kindness: I had rather have

Such men my friends than enemies. Go on,
And see whether Brutus be alive or dead,
And bring us word unto Octavius' tent
How every thing is chanced. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V — ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD

Enter BRUTUS, DARDANIUS, CLITUS, STRATO, *and* VOLUMNIUS

BRU. Come, poor remains of friends, rest on this rock.

CLI. Statilius show'd the torch-light, but, my lord,
He came not back: he is or ta'en or slain.

BRU. Sit thee down, Clitus: slaying is the word;
It is a deed in fashion. Hark thee, Clitus. [*Whispering.*

CLI. What, I, my lord? No, not for all the world.

BRU. Peace then, no words.

CLI. I'll rather kill myself.

BRU. Hark thee, Dardanius. [*Whispering.*

DAR. Shall I do such a deed?

CLI. O Dardanius!

DAR. O Clitus!

CLI. What ill request did Brutus make to thee?

DAR. To kill him, Clitus. Look, he meditates.

CLI. Now is that noble vessel full of grief,
That it runs over even at his eyes.

BRU. Come hither, good Volumnius; list a word.

VOL. What says my lord?

BRU. Why, this, Volumnius:
The ghost of Cæsar hath appear'd to me
Two several times by night; at Sardis once,

And this last night here in Philippi fields:
I know my hour is come.
VOL. Not so, my lord.
BRU. Nay, I am sure it is, Volumnius.
Thou seest the world, Volumnius, how it goes;
Our enemies have beat us to the pit: [*Low alarums.*
It is more worthy to leap in ourselves
Than tarry till they push us. Good Volumnius,
Thou know'st that we two went to school together:
Even for that our love of old, I prithee,
Hold thou my sword-hilts, whilst I run on it.
VOL. That's not an office for a friend, my lord.
[*Alarum still.*
CLI. Fly, fly, my lord; there is no tarrying here.
BRU. Farewell to you; and you; and you, Volumnius.
Strato, thou hast been all this while asleep;
Farewell to thee too, Strato. Countrymen,
My heart doth joy that yet in all my life
I found no man but he was true to me.
I shall have glory by this losing day,
More than Octavius and Mark Antony
By this vile conquest shall attain unto.
So, fare you well at once; for Brutus' tongue
Hath almost ended his life's history:
Night hangs upon mine eyes; my bones would rest,
That have but labour'd to attain this hour.
[*Alarum. Cry within,* "Fly, fly, fly!"

---

23 *beat us to the pit*] beat us to the last ditch, destroyed us.

CLI. Fly, my lord, fly.
BRU. Hence! I will follow.
[*Exeunt Clitus, Dardanius, and Volumnius.*
I prithee, Strato, stay thou by thy lord:
Thou art a fellow of a good respect;
Thy life hath had some smatch of honour in it:
Hold then my sword, and turn away thy face,
While I do run upon it. Wilt thou, Strato?
STRA. Give me your hand first: fare you well, my lord.
BRU. Farewell, good Strato. [*Runs on his sword.*] Cæsar, now be still:
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will. [*Dies.*

Alarum. Retreat. Enter OCTAVIUS, ANTONY, MESSALA, LUCILIUS, *and the army*

OCT. What man is that?
MES. My master's man. Strato, where is thy master?
STRA. Free from the bondage you are in, Messala:
The conquerors can but make a fire of him;
For Brutus only overcame himself,
And no man else hath honour by his death.
LUCIL. So Brutus should be found. I thank thee, Brutus,
That thou hast proved Lucilius' saying true.
OCT. All that served Brutus, I will entertain them.
Fellow, wilt thou bestow thy time with me?

45 *good respect*] good reputation.
46 *smatch*] smack, tinge.
60 *entertain them*] take them into my service.

STRA. Ay, if Messala will prefer me to you.
OCT. Do so, good Messala.
MES. How died my master, Strato?
STRA. I held the sword, and he did run on it.
MES. Octavius, then take him to follow thee,
That did the latest service to my master.
ANT. This was the noblest Roman of them all:
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar;
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world "This was a man!"
OCT. According to his virtue let us use him,
With all respect and rites of burial.
Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie,
Most like a soldier, order'd honourably.
So call the field to rest, and let's away,
To part the glories of this happy day. [*Exeunt.*

62 *prefer*] recommend; commonly used of masters recommending servants for service.

71–72 *in a general . . . to all*] out of an honest regard for the public good and for the general welfare.

81 *part*] divide, distribute.

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THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH ANNOTATIONS AND
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION
BY SIDNEY LEE

VOLUME XV

HAMLET

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY GEORGE SANTAYANA
AND AN ORIGINAL FRONTISPIECE BY F. C. COWPER

BOSTON THE JEFFERSON PRESS *NEW YORK*

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CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction to Hamlet by George Santayana . . .	ix
Text of the Play	1

INTRODUCTION

THE greater figures of fiction, as behooves things destined to last, have usually had an evolution and a history. Like the immortal gods, they have taken vague shape in the popular mind and in anonymous legends before receiving their most memorable form at the hands of some supreme poet. Perhaps no small part of Shakespeare's eminence is due to his having adopted plots and characters already current, already sanctioned by a certain proved vitality and power to charm. This conservatism is one of the many bonds by which art, when successful, clings to the life of the world and sucks in strength parasitically through its practical functions. Shakespeare's need of being a playwright before he was a poet, his concern to produce a popular play, won an

audience for him in the beginning and still enables him to hold the boards. When creative genius neglects to ally itself in this way to some public interest it hardly gives birth to works of wide or perennial influence. Imagination needs a soil in history, tradition, or human institutions, else its random growths are not significant enough and, like trivial melodies, go immediately out of fashion. A great poem needs to be built up and remodelled on some given foundation with materials already at hand. Even in those fables which, like that of Don Quixote, may seem to be casual and original thoughts, we can usually detect a certain stage of experimentation with the idea, a certain novitiate and self-discovery on its part. The hero's character does not come out at first in its ultimate shape, but the shape it comes in, taking root and branching out in the mind into growths that had never been expected, becomes the germ of what is finally accepted and given out to the public. The true ideal of the most airy things is discoverable only by experimental methods, and there is nothing to which the approach is more blind and tentative than to the heart.

For this reason readers of Hamlet should not be surprised if this most psychological of tragedies should turn out to be a product of gradual accretions, or if its hero, most spontaneous and individual of characters, should be an afterthought and a discovery. Shakespeare followed a classic precept in this romantic drama: he allowed the plot to suggest the characters, and conceived their motives and psychological movement only as an underpinning and satiric deepening for their known actions. The

play is an ordinary story with an extraordinary elaboration. Not only did Shakespeare, as his practice was, borrow an old plot, but he apparently worked over a first version of his own play and "enlarged it to almost as much again as it was." The personage of Hamlet, no less than the episodes of the piece, shows traces of this expansion. Some of Hamlet's actions and speeches seem anterior to his true character. They apparently remain over from the old melodrama and mark the points neglected by the poet and left untransmuted by his intuition.

These survivals of cruder methods, if survivals they be, give a touch of positive incoherence to Hamlet's character, otherwise sufficiently complex. His behaviour, for instance, before the praying King, and the reasons he gives there for sparing the villain, are apparently a remnant of bombast belonging to the old story, far more Christian and conventional in its motives than Shakespeare's is. So the grotesque bout with Laertes in Ophelia's grave is perhaps a bit of old rhodomontade left unexpunged. The disconcerting mixture of comic and ignoble elements in several crucial passages may be due to the same circumstance, as, for example, when Hamlet says of the Ghost, "Ah, ha, boy . . . Art there, truepenny? . . . You hear this fellow in the cellarage. . . . Old mole, canst work in the earth so fast?" or when he crowns the heart-rending closet scene with a bad pun: "Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you," as he draws out Polonius' body. These passages may contain remnants of that conventional farce which, as some think,

was inherited by Elizabethan drama from the Middle Ages, when piety and obscenity, quaint simplicity and rant, could be jumbled together without offence. Yet this barbaric medley, surviving by chance or by inertia, is the occasion for the creation of a spirit that shall justify it, and shall express therein its own profound discord. The historical accidents that make these patches in the play are embodied and personified in a mind that can cover them all by its own complexity and dislocation. Each of these blots thus becomes a beauty, each of these accidents a piece of profound characterisation. In Hamlet's personality incoherent sentiments due, in a genetic sense, to the imperfect recasting of a grotesque old story, are made attributable ideally to his habit of acting out a mood irresponsibly and of giving a mock expression to every successive intuition. Thus his false rhetoric before the praying King becomes characteristic, and may be taken to betray an inveterate vacillation which seizes on verbal excuses and plays with unreal sentiments in order to put off the moment of action. So at Ophelia's grave he may be said to exhibit his ingrained histrionic habit, his incapacity to control the inner dialogue or dream in his own mind, which continually carries him into fits of speech and action, sometimes incongruous with one another but always ingenious and fetched from the depths of a distracted and tender heart. So, too, his sardonic humour and nonsensical verbiage at the most tragic junctures may justify themselves ideally and seem to be deeply inspired. These wild starts suggest a mind inwardly rent asunder, a delicate genius disordered, such

as we now learn that Hamlet's was, a mind that with infinite sensibility possessed no mastery over itself nor over things. Thus the least digested elements in the fable come, by a happy turn, to constitute its profoundest suggestion.

The Middle Ages and the Renaissance into which they finally burst had at once a decrepit and a juvenile character. They looked back with rather a doting and indiscriminate respect on the confused past, while at the same time they bubbled over with all manner of native mischief and fancy. In Gothic drama, as in Gothic architecture, we find bits of savage or classic antiquity, incongruities, afterthoughts, and accretions, old materials, precious or rude, built again into a new edifice. Yet these accepted and sanctified accidents make the charm and bewitching poetry of the work, for they have crystallised into a new style and a new structure; a historical junk-shop has become the temple of a new spirit. Its miscellaneous treasures, so heaped together, have acquired their own expression and pathos, and a certain unifying mystery has settled over the whole. The beauty and ideal import of a human work can thus come to resemble that of landscape or of a living body; it can be felt instinctively by a certain assimilation on the observer's part to the object's general movement, without any distinct discrimination of the elements involved.

Evidently the same thing happened to Shakespeare with his histrionic Prince that happened to Cervantes with his mad Knight: he fell in love with his hero. He caught in that figure, at first only grotesque and melo-

dramatic, the suggestion of something noble, spiritual, and pathetic, and he devoted all his imaginative powers to developing that suggestion. He enriched the lines with all that reflection could furnish that was most pungent and poetical; he added the philosophic play of mind, gave free rein to soliloquy, insisted everywhere on what might seem keen and significant. At the same time he found pleasure in elaborating the story. He constructed, for instance, a young Hamlet, to stand behind the tragic hero, a witty, tender, and accomplished prince, to be overtaken by that cursed spite which he should prove incapable of turning aside. Here we have a piece of deliberate art. By numerous and well-chosen phrases scattered throughout the play, Shakespeare takes pains to evoke the image of a consummate and admirable nature, so that the charm and pathos of the tragedy which ruins it may be enhanced. In the young Hamlet we are asked to imagine the

> "Unmatched form and feature of blown youth,"
>
> "The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
> The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> The observed of all observers!"

We learn of his proficiency in fencing, his fondness for the stage, and his competence as a critic of it; he is attached enough to the university to prefer it to the court. He can adopt for a moment the affectations of clever people, and be enough of a prig "to hold it baseness to write fair"; but he writes fair, nevertheless.

His "noble and most sovereign reason" pierces most things in the world, and among them philosophy (or, as we should say, science) of which he understands enough to see its limits. He knows how to humour and play with a fop no less than how to expose and transfix a flatterer, and he can be as contemptuous of foolish wordiness in a counsellor, as he can be courteous to sincerity in a humble artist. For comradeship he has a natural sense and is willing to drink deep with an old acquaintance; but for true intimacy he chooses the poor scholar and devoted friend, unworldly because capable of understanding the world, and shows in this choice his princely freedom and elevation of mind. And lest the last crown and flower of generous youth should be wanting, Hamlet is, of course, in love. Yet he is not without a more sober and settled affection than that expressed in his fancy for the fair Ophelia; his deepest sentiment is a great love and admiration for the King, his father. On this natural piety in the young Hamlet his new tragic life is to be grafted. By striking rudely in this quarter fate strikes not merely at his filial affection, but at his intellectual peace and at his confidence in justice. The wound is mortal and saps his moral being.

The hero, so conceived, is presented to us by the instrumentality of that same plot which had originally suggested his character. The beloved father dies suddenly, and to the son's natural grief at this loss is added the scandal of his mother's hasty second marriage. A heavy mood, filled with vague sinister suspicions, falls upon Hamlet. Presently, the supernatural comes upon

the scene. Hamlet sees his father's ghost. He receives audible and explicit tidings of his mother's adultery and his father's murder.

We might say that to see — or if the spiritualistic reader prefers — to call up a ghost, is a first sign of Hamlet's moral dissolution. It would be easy to rationalise this part of the story, and explain the Ghost as a sort of symbol or allegory. Hamlet's character and situation were well conceived to base such a hallucination upon. His prophetic soul might easily have cheated him with such a counterfeit presentment of its own suspicions. But Shakespeare was evidently content to take the Ghost literally, and expected his audience naturally to do the same. Although not visible to the Queen on its final appearance, the Ghost is seen by Horatio and others on several occasions. The report it gives of its torments corresponds to the popular and orthodox conception of Purgatory, so that a Christian public might accept this ghost as a possible wanderer from the other world. Had Shakespeare cared much about ghosts, or wished to give, as in Macbeth, a realistic picture of the shabby supernatural, Hamlet's Ghost might well have been a much less theological and conventional being. It might have resembled somewhat more the shade of Achilles in the Odyssey, which is a beautiful idealisation of the spirits actually evoked by necromancy in all ages, which are echoes of former existences in this world, witless, fretful, sad, and unseizable. But such shades were little cultivated in Shakespeare's day. The Church had no need of them, and wished to preserve

its ideal conception of the other world free from all empirical and pathological influences. Shakespeare's Ghost is accordingly wholly, though inconsistently, conventional. It is a Christian soul in Purgatory, which ought, in theological strictness, to be a holy and ideal essence, a phase of penitential and spiritual experience; yet this soul fears to scent the morning air, trembles at the cock-crow, and instigates the revenging of crime by crime. That is, it is no Christian soul, but a heathen and pathological spectre. It speaks, as Hamlet justly feels, by the ambiguous authority of hell and heaven at once. This hybrid personage, however, like the other anomalies in the play, comes to have its expressive value. It unites in a single image various threads of superstition actually tangled in the public mind. Ostensibly an emissary from the other world, such as would be admissible by a slightly heterodox Christian fancy, the Ghost is at the same time an echo of popular fable and demonology, and withal a moral and dramatic symbol, a definite *point d'appui* for the hero's morbid impulses. If Hamlet had not been likely to imagine a Ghost, Shakespeare would hardly have created one. There is affinity and emotional congruity in the various mysteries gathered together in this scene, — the night, the sea, the hidden crime, the hero's metaphysical melancholy, and the budding purpose in him to enact madness. Into this artful setting the Ghost falls naturally enough, and under the scenic spell of its presence we do not stop to ask which elements in that apparition are food for Hamlet's fancy, and which are rather its products and expression.

The first effect of the Ghost's revelation is characteristic of Hamlet's nature. He and the Ghost both insist on secrecy, as if too much had already been done. Hamlet induces his fellow-witnesses to swear to keep silence about the marvel they have seen; he checks a natural impulse to repeat the Ghost's story; and the Ghost himself, on its way to its subterranean torture-chamber, echoes Hamlet's demand — "Swear, Swear" — in hollow and melodramatic accents. Why this fear to divulge the truth? Why this unnecessary precaution and delay? Why this fantastic notion, at once imposing itself on the hero's mind, that there would be occasion for him to feign madness and put an antic disposition on? The simple truth is, that the play pre-exists and imposes itself here on the poet, who is reduced to paving the way as best he can for the foregone complications. Had Hamlet forthwith communicated his mission to his friends and rushed with them to the banquet hall where the King was at that moment carousing, had he instantly despatched the usurper and proclaimed himself king in his stead, there would have been no occasion for four more acts and for so much heart-searching soliloquy. The given plot is the starting-point, and its irrationality at this juncture, by which the comic effects of a feigned madness were secured for the playwright, must be accepted as a fundamental datum on which incidents and characters are alike built up.

Those who have maintained that Hamlet is really mad had this partial justification for their paradox, that Hamlet is irrational. He acts without reflection, as he reflects

without acting. At the basis of all his ingenuity and reasoning, of his nimble wit and varied feeling, lies this act of inexplicable folly: that he conceals his discovery, postpones his vengeance before questioning its propriety, and descends with no motive to a grotesque and pitiful piece of dissimulation. This unreason is not madness, because his intellect remains clear, his discourse sound and comprehensive; but it is a sort of passionate weakness and indirection in his will, which mocks its own ends, strikes fantastic attitudes, and invents elaborate schemes of action useless for his declared purposes. The psychology of Hamlet is like that which some German metaphysicians have attributed to their Spirit of the World, which is the prey to its own perversity and to what is called romantic irony, so that it eternally pursues the good in a way especially designed never to attain it. In Hamlet, as in them, beneath this histrionic duplicity and earnestness about the unreal, there is a very genuine pathos. Such brilliant futility is really helpless and sick at heart. The clouded will which plays with all these artifices of thought would fain break its way to light and self-knowledge through this magic circle of sophistication. It is the tragedy of a soul buzzing in the glass prison of a world which it can neither escape nor understand, in which it flutters about without direction, without clear hope, and yet with many a keen pang, many a dire imaginary problem, and much exquisite music.

This morbid indirection of Hamlet's, in the given situation, yields the rest of the play. Its theme is a hidden crime met by a fantastic and incapable virtue. The

hero's reaction takes various forms: his soliloquies and reflections, his moody and artful treatment of other persons, his plans and spurts of action. In soliloquy Hamlet is much the same from the beginning to the end of the piece. His philosophy learns little from events and consequently makes little progress. When he has still nothing more portentous to disturb him than his father's death and his mother's marriage, he already wishes that his too, too solid flesh should melt, and that the Everlasting had not laid His canon against self-slaughter. The uses of this world seem to him even then wholly weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable. This remains his habitual sentiment whenever he looks within, but he can meantime be won over at any moment to shrewd and satirical observation of things external. If the funeral baked meats coldly furnish forth the marriage tables, it is, he tells us, but thrift; nor is his habit of mind at all changed when at the point of highest tension in his adventures, he stops to consider how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar, nor when, in a lull that precedes the last spasm of his destiny, he versifies the same theme:—

> "Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
> O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!"

This satirical humour, touching melancholy with the sting of absurdity, crops up everywhere. "I am too much in the sun," he says, with a bitter and jocular ob-

security. "He is at supper: not where he eats but where he is eaten; a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him."

Reason in young men is an accomplishment rather than a vital function, and may be allowed to play pranks with respectable ideas and to seem capricious and even mad; but while enjoying this license and turning, as it were, somersaults in the air, reason remains by nature the organ of truth, and seizes every opportunity which its game affords to prick some sanctified bubble and aim some home thrust at the foibles of the world. This sort of youthful roguery has a fine sincerity about it; under the sparkle of paradox it shows a loyal heart and a tongue not yet suborned to the praising of familiar or necessary evils. Nevertheless such idealism is lame because it cannot conceive a better alternative to the things it criticises. It stops at bickerings and lamentations which, although we cannot deny the ample warrant they have in experience, leave us disconcerted and in an unstable equilibrium, ready to revert, when imagination falters, to all our old platitudes and conventional judgments. Therefore Hamlet's sad reflections have in the end the merit of humour rather than of wisdom. Their aptness is inconsequential. His sense for what is good and ideal is strong enough to raise him above worldliness and a gross optimism, but it is far too negative and poor to inspire creation in the imaginative sphere or better action in the world.

Hamlet's attitude towards the minor characters in the play is a source of perennial joy to spectators and readers.

His words and manner to Polonius, Horatio, Rosencranz, and Guildenstern, the players, the grave-diggers, the court messenger, are alike keen, kindly, witty, and noble. Since he is playing at madness he can allow his humour to be broader, his scorn franker, his fancy more wayward than they could well have been otherwise ; yet in all mock disguises appears the same exquisite courtesy, even in that clever and cruel parrying of the King's treachery during the expedition to England. It is when we come to Hamlet's attitude towards the other chief figures, — the Ghost, Ophelia, the Queen, — that we observe a certain indistinctness and dispersion of mind, so that both the hero's character and the poet's intention are, to say the least, less obvious. In the Ghost's presence Hamlet is overcome with feeling, in its absence with doubts. What he ostensibly wishes to have confirmed is the Ghost's veracity, and the play scene is arranged to obtain corroboration of this. Yet when that ostensible doubt is solved and the facts are beyond question, he is no more ready for action than before. He still feels a reluctance to kill the King, founded apparently no longer on doubts about his crime but on scruples or distaste in avenging it. The suspicious element in the Ghost was really less the testimony it gave than the behaviour it inspired, the mission of active vengeance which it seemed to lay on the kindly and meditative prince. Such conduct was indeed conformable to tradition and barbarous practice, but it was opposed to the secret promptings of the man's own mind. In his individual and free reflection he could find more grounds for suicide than for murder. When

the Ghost appears there is room in Hamlet's heart only for filial affection, and horror at seeing his father in such a shape; but as the sensuous impression fades it passes into a doubtful and sinister obsession. Hamlet feels that he is leaving a duty unperformed and at the same time that he is being driven on by the devil. If his instinctive hesitation could have expressed itself theoretically he might perhaps have asked whether the treacherous murder of one innocent man could well be righted by more treachery and more murder, involving disaster to many innocent persons. Of course neither a prosaic rationalism of this sort, nor foresight of what in that particular case was likely to ensue, could properly be expected in Hamlet; yet possibly some premonition of both existed in the poet's mind and gave Hamlet's hesitation that symbolic and moral import which we somehow feel it to possess. Conventional maxims, stock passions, and theological sanctions play very different rôles in different people's lives. In the vulgar they may serve to cloak the absence of genuine principles and of a fixed purpose of any kind. In noble minds they may cheapen the genuine intuitions which they come to clothe, and make these intuitions fall short of that clearness and generosity which they would have shown if they had found free and untrammelled expression. So Hamlet's whole entanglement with the Ghost, and with the crude morality of vengeance which the plot imposes upon him, fails to bring his own soul to a right utterance, and this stifling of his better potential mind is no small part of his tragedy. Or is it only a fond critic's illusion that

makes us read that better idea into what is a purely unconscious barbarism and a vacillation useful for theatrical purposes?

Toward his mother Hamlet maintains throughout the greater part of the play a wounded reserve appropriate to the situation. He speaks of her with sarcasm, but addresses her with curt respect. Only in the closet scene does he unbosom himself with a somewhat emphatic eloquence, which shows touches of dignity and pathos; yet this scene, central as it is in the plot, hardly rises in power above the level of its neighbours. In comparison, for instance, the scenes with Ophelia are full of wonder and charm. There the poet's imagination flowers out, and Hamlet appears in all his originality and wild inspiration. Yet Ophelia and Hamlet's relation to her are incidental to the drama, while the Queen and her fate are essential to it. We may observe in general that Shakespeare's genius shines in the texture of his poems rather than in their structure, in imagery and happy strokes rather than in integrating ideas. His poetry plays about life like ivy about a house, and is more akin to landscape than to architecture. He feels no vocation to call the stones themselves to their ideal places and enchant the very substance and skeleton of the world. How blind to him, and to Hamlet, are all ultimate issues, and the sum total of things how unseizable! The heathen chaos enveloping everything is all the more sensible on account of the lovely natures which it engulfs. Ophelia, for instance, that slight and too flexible treble in the general dirge, turns it to favour and to prettiness. If she had been a

casual ornamental figure, like Ariel, introduced only for its own sake, she would not have illustrated so well the main drift of the drama nor been herself so touching an apparition. She is closely bound up with the plot, and what is more important, with the emotion it arouses; yet she is hardly necessary, and Hamlet's affection for her, though a real and congruent part of his experience, forms only an incidental and subordinate part of it. He loved Ophelia before the catastrophe came that unhinged his life; afterwards he remembers her, when he comes across her, as one might remember some tender episode of childhood. His feeling is sentiment rather than passion. He grows sentimental under the influence of her sensuous charm and of her innocence. "Here's metal more attractive," he says in one place; and in another,

> "Nymph, in thy orisons
> Be all my sins remember'd."

His love for her plays no part in his essential resolutions. She does not console him at all, even in his initial bereavement and first suspicions. The speeches in his first scene are not those of a man in love. His pleasure in Ophelia's presence, his interest in his own love, has been undone by enterprises of greater pith and moment. When face to face with her grief, he is not impelled to explain and appeal to her constancy and trust, or invite her to share his calamity. His impulse is merely to despair and throw the blame upon the world at large. "Get thee to a nunnery, go." "Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" There is doubtless a shade of

jealousy in this cry, with a touch of tender solicitude to save and screen her from his own troubles. Yet the dominating sentiment is one of helpless regret. He is sorry, very sorry; but it does not occur to him that he can do anything or can find in Ophelia any resource or inspiration. His love, though sincere, seems to him now one of the frail treasures of his youth, blasted by destiny. It had never taken deep enough root in his soul to endure the blasts of fortune, and be, like his love for his father, one of the moving forces in his destiny itself.

Hamlet's positive and deliberate action is limited to two stratagems, one with the players, to catch the King's conscience, and one by which he makes Rosencranz and Guildenstern suffer the fate prepared for himself in England. In both cases Hamlet betrays a sort of exuberance and wild delight. He feels the luxury of hitting home, the absolute joy of playing the game, without particular reference to the end in view. The speech in which he recounts his escape from shipboard and his counterfeiting the King's letter, positively bubbles over with high spirits and the sense of mastery. In the play scene, too, he is all vivacity and eager comments. He cannot suppress his tense excitement, and comes near defeating his plan by disclosing it prematurely. When the bubble has burst and his point is gained, he is incoherent in his exultation, in his relief at having discovered the worst, and his joy at having verified his expectations. If he acts seldom and with difficulty, it is not because he does not hugely enjoy action. Yet his delight is in the shimmer and movement of action rather than in its use, so that the

weakness of his character appears just as much in his bursts of activity as in his long hesitations. He kills Polonius by accident, hoping that in a blind thrust through the arras he might turn out at last to have despatched the King ; and when, himself mortally wounded, he finally executes that long-meditated sentence, he can do so only by yielding to a sudden hysterical impulse. So consistently does unreason pursue him: an inexplicable crime is followed by a miraculous vision ; that portent he meets by a senseless and too congenial pretence of madness ; a successful stratagem confirms the King's guilt, but does not lead to his exposure or punishment, rather to a passive reconciliation with him on Hamlet's part. Innocent persons meantime perish, and the end is a general but casual slaughter, amid treachery, misunderstandings, and ghastly confusions.

This picture of universal madness is relieved by the very finest and purest glints of wit, intelligence, and feeling. It is crammed with exquisite lines, and vivified by most interesting and moving characters, in great variety, all drawn with masterly breadth, depth, and precision. Hamlet, in particular, as our analysis testifies, is more than a vivid dramatic figure, more than an unparalleled poetic vision. He lays bare the heart of a whole race, or, perhaps we should rather say, expresses a conflict to which every soul is more or less liable. There is a kind of initial earnestness in all life which in some people remains predominant ; a certain soulfulness and idealism which the Germans attribute especially to themselves, but which they would probably recognise also in the

deeper intuitions of English poetry. It is a mood proper to youth ; and youth in a race (since there is no question of a shorter descent from Adam or his Darwinian rival) can only mean that at a given juncture sentiment, fancy, and dialectic have outrun external experience. Youth is far from implying less complexity than age or a meaner endowment, for youth, at least potentially, often has the advantage in these respects. Youth means only less complete adjustment of capacity to opportunity, of intelligence to practice and art. In a fertile mind such want of adjustment intensifies self-consciousness and, because so much that the mind is pregnant with remains unexpressed and untested, it produces a sense of vague profundity which is often an illusion. An unexpressed mind may be deep, but is none the deeper for not exercising itself successfully on real things ; and though it need not lack poetry or philosophy for being comparatively without experience, yet its poetry will tend to be irrelevant and fantastic, and its philosophy *a priori*. The former will show more airy richness than rational beauty, and the latter more ingenuity than wisdom. These characteristics, whether or not essential to the spirit of " The North," are unmistakably present in Hamlet's person. They render his moral being " dark, true, and tender." He is strong in his integrity and purity of purpose, but lost in floating emotion, perplexed by want of concentration and of self-knowledge. Here is immense endowment and strange incompetence, constant perspicacity and general confusion, entire virtue in the intention, and complete disaster in the result.

An apt pupil of philosophy, of politics, of art, of love, Hamlet is master in nothing. The solution eludes him for every riddle and even for every plain question; and his vast consciousness is ignorant of its own function. Compare with such a mind what may be called by contrast the mind of the East or South, the mind of fatigued and long-indoctrinated races, disillusioned, distinct, malicious, for the most part unblushingly subservient to interest, passion, or superstition (for this temperament is too worn and skeptical to think rebellion worth while), yet in its reflective phase detached and contemplative, able occasionally to despise all entanglements, to dominate the will, and to look truth in the eye without blinking. If Shakespeare had intended to make his drama allegorical of this contrast, he could not have hit upon a better theme and title: Hamlet the Dane! How that name evokes the image of virgin and barbarous heroes standing on the horizon of the world! Their experience upon descending among the nations must have been quite like Hamlet's on finding himself suddenly in a perverse world. They too must have been burdened with longing, scornful of corruption, touched yet puzzled by Christianity, attracted yet wounded by civilisation. Although Shakespeare was troubled, of course, by no such thought of historic symbolism, and made Hamlet in all externals a prince of Queen Elizabeth's time, yet the assimilation would not on that account cease to be possible. It was at bottom no anachronism to give a barbaric jewel an Elizabethan setting. The old Norseman's soul was uncontaminated by migration into a

richer age and a milder air; in fact the poet's nation had not, in spirit, outgrown or disowned its ancestry.

The ghost scenes in "Hamlet" are excellent examples of profound, ill-digested emotions breaking out fiercely against circumstances which are not well in hand, and which consequently are not met intelligently or successfully by the inspiration in question. This ghost is not like the deities that often appear in Greek tragedy, a *deus ex machina* coming to solve, in the light of serene thought and eternal interests, the tangled problems of the single life. On the contrary, this ghost is a party to the conflict, an instigator of sinister thoughts, a thing hatched in a nest of sorrows. Its scope is so exclusively personal that it may well seem the very coinage of the brain; yet it is ostensibly miraculous, noble, pathetic, veracious. It is at once a spectre and a suspicion, a physical marvel and an inward and authoritative voice. Our reason itself flits with this ghost through a night half mockery and half horror. We feel that not Hamlet the Dane but the human soul in its inmost depths is moonstruck and haunted. Poetry, in these wonderful scenes, does not entrance by presenting natural and heavenly harmonies so convincingly that the heart too begins to beat in unison with them; that might be the highest achievement of some classic poet. Here, when the deepest note is sounded, we can only cry, "O Hamlet! thou hast cleft my heart in twain." We wait to see the spectacle of things dissolved and exorcised. The fretted pipe has defied all earthly powers to play upon it, this too, too solid flesh has melted away, and the rest, as Hamlet says, is silence.

All this, however, is only half, and the less intentional half, of what comes before us in this unfathomable poem. The impression of utter gloom which the plot leaves when taken, so to speak, realistically, as if it were a picture of actual existences, is not the impression it leaves when we take it as lyric poetry, as music, as an abstract representation of sundry moods and loyalties traversing a noble mind. The world which is set before us may be grotesque and distracted ; but we are not asked to be interested in that world. Had Hamlet himself been interested in it, he would have acted more rationally. It was not intelligence or courage that he lacked ; it was practical conviction or sense for reality. Had he possessed this he would have turned his wits and sympathies towards improving the given situation, as he turns them towards improving the player's art. In truth he cared nothing for the world ; man pleased him not, no, nor woman, neither ; and we may well abandon to its natural confusion a dream in which we do not believe. Had Hamlet tried to justify his temperament by expressing it in a philosophy, he would have been an idealist. He would have said that events were only occasions for exercising the spirit ; they were nothing but imagined situations meant to elicit a certain play of mind. If a man's comments had been keen, if his heart had been tender, if his will had been upright and pure, the rest was nothing. The world might feign to be mad and put on an antic disposition ; it was sane enough if it fulfilled its purpose and gave a man an opportunity to test his own mettle. Those idiocies and horrors which he lived among would

have been in truth the flights of angels that bore him to his rest. At any rate, express it how we will, the sympathetic reader will instinctively feel that he should pass over lightly the experience which the play depicts and carry away from it only the moral feeling, the spiritual sentiment, which it calls forth in the characters. As the poet himself thought a violent and somewhat absurd fable not unworthy to support his richest verse and subtlest characterisations, so we must take the fabric of destiny, in this tragedy and in that, too, which we enact in the world, as it happens to be, and think the moral lights that flicker through it bright enough to redeem it.

We must remember that the modern mind, like the modern world, is compacted out of ruins, and that the fresh northern spirit, inducted into that Byzantine labyrinth which we call civilisation, feels a marked discord between its genius and its culture. The latter is alien and imperfectly grafted on the living stem from which it must draw its sap. Hence the most radical and excruciating experience of the romantic mind comes from just such hereditary incoherence, just such perplexity and half-feigned madness, just such obsession by artifices, as Hamlet presents to us in a tragic miniature. The deep interest of this figure lies accordingly in its affinity to the situation in which every romantic spirit must in a measure find itself. There is no richer or more exquisite monument to the failure of emotional good-will, and of intelligence inclined to embroider rather than to build. So absolute a feat of imagination cannot be ranked in comparison with other works, nor estimated by any standard

of which it does not itself furnish the suggestion and type. It is rather to be studied and absorbed, to be made a part of our habitual landscape and mental furniture, lest we should miss much of what is deepest and rarest in human feeling. If we care to pass, however, from admiration of the masterpiece to reflection on the experience it expresses, we see that here is no necessary human tragedy, no universal destiny or divine law. It is a picture of incidental unfitness, of a genius wasted for being plucked quite unripe from the sunny places of the world. In Hamlet our incoherent souls see their own image; in him romantic potentiality and romantic failure wears each its own feature. In him we see the gifts most congenial and appealing to us reduced to a pathetic impotence because of the disarray in which we are content to leave them.

GEORGE SANTAYANA.

HAMLET

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ[1]

CLAUDIUS, king of Denmark.
HAMLET, son to the late, and nephew to the present king.
POLONIUS, lord chamberlain.
HORATIO, friend to Hamlet.
LAERTES, son to Polonius.
VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, OSRIC, A Gentleman, } courtiers.
A Priest.
MARCELLUS, BERNARDO, } officers.
FRANCISCO, a soldier.
REYNALDO, servant to Polonius.
Players.
Two Clowns, grave-diggers.
FORTINBRAS, prince of Norway.
A Captain.
English Ambassadors.

GERTRUDE, queen of Denmark, and mother to Hamlet.
OPHELIA, daughter to Polonius.

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers, and other Attendants.

Ghost of Hamlet's Father.

SCENE: *Denmark*

[1] This piece was first printed in quarto very imperfectly in 1603. A fuller and better text was published in quarto in 1604, and this was reissued in 1605, in 1611, in an undated volume (about 1612), in 1637, and four or five times later. The improved text of the First Folio follows a different transcript. The Quartos have no divisions into Acts or Scenes. The Folio only marks the Acts and Scenes as far as Act II, Scene ii. Rowe first completed the distribution of Acts and Scenes, and first supplied a list of the "dramatis personæ," and the "Scene."

ACT FIRST — SCENE I — ELSINORE

A PLATFORM BEFORE THE CASTLE

FRANCISCO *at his post. Enter to him* BERNARDO

BERNARDO

WHO 'S THERE?

FRAN. Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

BER. Long live the king!

FRAN. Bernardo?

BER. He.

FRAN. You come most carefully upon your hour.

BER. 'T is now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRAN. For this relief much thanks: 't is bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

BER. Have you had quiet guard?

FRAN. Not a mouse stirring. 10

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2 *Nay, answer me*] "Me" is the emphatic word. The speaker is the sentinel still on duty, and challenges the newcomer, Bernardo, who has arrived to relieve guard.

BER. Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.
FRAN. I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS

HOR. Friends to this ground.
MAR. And liegemen to the Dane.
FRAN. Give you good night.
MAR. O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath relieved you?
FRAN. Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night. [*Exit.*
MAR. Holla! Bernardo!
BER. Say,
What, is Horatio there?
HOR. A piece of him.
BER. Welcome, Horatio; welcome, good Marcellus.
MAR. What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?
BER. I have seen nothing.
MAR. Horatio says 't is but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:
Therefore I have entreated him along

13 *rivals*] partners. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, III, v, 8: "rivality," *i. e.*, partnership.

16 *Give you good night*] May God give you good night.

19 *A piece of him*] A jesting meiosis: "what there is of him."

21 *What, . . . to-night?*] The First Quarto and the Folios give this line (as here) to Marcellus; the other early editions give it to Horatio.

With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.
HOR. Tush, tush, 't will not appear.
BER. Sit down a while;
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we have two nights seen.
HOR. Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.
BER. Last night of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one, —

Enter Ghost

MAR. Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!
BER. In the same figure, like the king that's dead.
MAR. Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.
BER. Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.
HOR. Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.
BER. It would be spoke to.
MAR. Question it, Horatio.

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29 *approve our eyes*] confirm or make good our vision.

42 *Thou art a scholar; speak to it*] The exorcism of evil spirits was commonly couched in Latin, and the exorcist was necessarily a Latin scholar. Cf. *Much Ado*, II, i, 228: "I would to God *some scholar would conjure her*," and I, v, 156, *infra*.

HOR. What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee, speak!
MAR. It is offended.
BER. See, it stalks away!
HOR. Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!
[*Exit Ghost.*
MAR. 'T is gone, and will not answer.
BER. How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on 't?
HOR. Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.
MAR. Is it not like the king?
HOR. As thou art to thyself:
Such was the very armour he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated;
So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.
'T is strange.

57 *the sensible and true avouch*] the perceptible and actual evidence.
62 *parle*] parley.
63 *sledded Polacks*] *Polacks, i. e.*, Poles, is Malone's change for *pollax* or *Pollax*, the reading of all editions earlier than the Fourth Folio, which reads *Pòle-axe*. Polacks is confirmed by the use of the word, II, ii, 63, 75, *infra*. "Sledded" seems connected with "sled" (*i. e.*, sleigh or sledge). Fynes Morison, in his *Itinerary*, 1617 (pt. i, 63 and pt. iii, 104), notes that the Poles habitually travelled in "sledges." He also (pt. iii, 170–1) describes them as wearing, when under arms,

MAR. Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.
HOR. In what particular thought to work I know not;
But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.
MAR. Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,
Why this same strict and most observant watch
So nightly toils the subject of the land,
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
And foreign mart for implements of war;
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task
Does not divide the Sunday from the week;
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day:
Who is't that can inform me?
HOR. That can I;
At least the whisper goes so. Our last king,

"shooes of leather and also of wood both painted & both shodde under the heele & toes with pieces of Iron making great noise as they goe," — a description which has suggested that "sledded" or "sleaded" may refer to the heavy manner in which the Poles were shod. Possibly "sledded," as an epithet of "pole-axe," might also mean either "leaded" or "sledge" (*i. e.*, heavy) as in "sledge-hammer." But it is more reasonable to assume that during a hard winter the elder Hamlet lost his temper in some negotiation with Polish foes (whether "sledded" refers to their sledges or their heavy boots) and struck them, than that a heavy pole-axe was his weapon of war. War between Norway and Poland is noticed, II, ii, 60–76, *infra*.

68 *in the gross and scope*] according to the main purport.
72 *So nightly . . . land*] Causes the people to toil so constantly by night.
74 *foreign mart*] traffic with foreigners.
75 *impress*] coercive enlistment.

Whose image even but now appear'd to us,
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet —
For so this side of our known world esteem'd him —
Did slay this Fortinbras; who by a seal'd compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror:
Against the which, a moiety competent
Was gaged by our king; which had return'd
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant
And carriage of the article design'd,
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved metal hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutes,
For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in 't: which is no other —
As it doth well appear unto our state —

87 *by law and heraldry*] by ordinary law and the code of chivalry.

90 *a moiety competent*] an equivalent portion of land.

93 *covenant*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *comart*, a rare word meaning "joint-bargain."

94 *carriage . . . design'd*] bearing or purport of the drawn agreement.

96 *unimproved*] unproved. Thus all early editions, save the First Quarto, which reads *inapproved, i. e.*, untried.

98–100 *Shark'd up . . . resolutes . . . a stomach in 't*] Raked together a band of determined desperadoes, seeking only food and diet, to engage in some enterprise that has spirit or smack of adventure in it.

101 *our state*] the rulers of our state.

But to recover of us, by strong hand
And terms compulsatory, those foresaid lands
So by his father lost: and this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,
The source of this our watch and the chief head
Of this post-haste and romage in the land.
BER. I think it be no other but e'en so:
Well may it sort, that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch, so like the king
That was and is the question of these wars.
HOR. A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:
. . . . . .
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,

---

103 *compulsatory*] compulsory. Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *compulsative*. Both forms are rare. Cf. III, iv, 86, *infra*, "compulsive."

106–107 *the chief head . . . romage*] the chief cause or aim of this hurry and bustle. "Romage," now commonly written "rummage," usually means "hurried search," "ransacking."

108–125 *I think it be . . . countrymen*] This passage is only found in the Quartos.

109 *Well may it sort*] Well may it agree with, account for.

114–118 *A little . . . sun*] Some of these portents are similarly noticed in *Jul. Cæs.*, Act II, Sc. ii.

117–118 *As stars . . . sun*] This sentence lacks a verb. It is usually assumed that a preceding line, such as *In the heavens above strange portents did appear* (Hunter), has dropped out of the text. It is possible that the introductory *As* has the elliptical force, "So also there were."

Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse:
And even the like precurse of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.

Re-enter Ghost

But soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me:
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O, speak!
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life

118 *the moist star*] the moon, which governs the tides. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, I, ii, 1, "the *watery star*."

120 *almost to doomsday*] almost to death.

121 *precurse*] forerunning, foreboding. Cf. *Phœnix and Turtle*, line 6, "precurrer," and *Temp.*, I, ii, 201, "precursors."

125 *our climatures*] those living in our climes.

127 *I'll cross it, . . . illusion*] Anyone crossing the path of a ghost was thought to incur death. The Quarto of 1604 adds to this line the stage direction, *It spreads his armes.*

134 *Which . . . foreknowing*] Of which perchance a foreknowledge.

136–138 *Or if thou . . . in death*] Misers who kept buried in the earth

Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it: stay, and speak! [*The cock crows.*] Stop it, Marcellus.

MAR. Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

HOR. Do, if it will not stand.

BER. 'T is here!

HOR. 'T is here!

MAR. 'T is gone! [*Exit Ghost.*]

We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

BER. It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

HOR. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day, and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine: and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.

MAR. It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,

---

wrongly acquired gold, could not, it was supposed, sleep in peace in the grave.

140 *partisan*] the watchman's pike.

154 *extravagant and erring*] Both words mean much the same, *i. e.*, vagrant, wandering.

The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

HOR. So have I heard and do in part believe it.
But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill:
Break we our watch up; and by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him:
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

MAR. Let's do 't, I pray; and I this morning know
Where we shall find him most conveniently. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II—A ROOM OF STATE IN THE CASTLE

Flourish. Enter the KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords, *and* Attendants

KING. Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,

162–163 *no planets strike . . . takes*] Both verbs, "strike" and "takes," refer to the malignant influences exerted by planets or fairies. The word "strike" is similarly used in "moon-struck." "Take" means "infect with evil," "bewitch." Cf. *Lear*, II, iv, 162: "You *taking* airs."

Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 't were with a defeated joy, —
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole, —
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleagued with this dream of his advantage,
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,

9 *jointress*] heiress. The word is sometimes applied to a widow in enjoyment of a jointure.

10 *a defeated joy*] a marred joy.

11 *an . . . a*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios repeat *one* in place of both *an* and *a*. The meaning is "one eye is happy and the other tearful." Cf. *Wint. Tale*, V, ii, 72–73: "She had *one eye declin'd . . . another elevated.*"

14 *barr'd*] excluded, ignored.

17 *that you know*] that which you know.

21 *Colleagued with . . . advantage*] Combined with this fancy of his superiority. The syntax seems irregular. The clause strictly speaking qualifies "a weak supposal" of line 17.

23 *Importing*] Importuning.

24 *bonds*] Thus the Folio. The Quartos read *bands*, a common variant.

To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting:
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, —
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose, — to suppress
His further gait herein; in that the levies,
The lists and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject: and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king more than the scope
Of these delated articles allow.
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

COR. } In that and all things will we show our duty.
VOL. }

KING. We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.

[*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.*

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is 't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?

---

31 *gait*] procedure, progress.

32 *full proportions*] full numbers (of the troops).

38 *delated*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *dilated*. Both forms are found in the sense of "set out at length." "Delated" is occasionally used for "carried," but not so here.

44–45 *You cannot . . . voice*] No reasonable request which you make to the ruler of Denmark will be refused.

The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAER. My dread lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France,
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

KING. Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POL. He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

KING. Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son, —

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47 *native*] natural, cognate, essential. Cf. IV, vii, 180, *infra*.

56 *leave and pardon*] permission and grant of (leave of absence). Cf. III, ii, 309, *infra*.

58–60 *wrung . . . hard consent*] Thus the Quartos. The words are omitted from the Folios.

60 *hard consent*] reluctant assent.

63 *thy best graces . . . will*] thy best virtues guide thee in spending thy time as thou wilt; put thy time to the best advantage.

64 *my cousin*] my kinsman. Hamlet was of course the speaker's nephew and step-son. "Cousin" was used of any blood relationship.

HAM. [*Aside*] A little more than kin, and less than kind.
KING. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?
HAM. Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.
QUEEN. Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailed lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.
HAM. Ay, madam, it is common.
QUEEN. If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?
HAM. Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not "seems."
'T is not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,

65 *kin . . . kind*] In this play upon words Hamlet is speaking to himself and commenting on the king's greeting of him as "cousin" and "son." Hamlet professes to be a little more than a kinsman (being both nephew and step-son), but deficient in sentiments of natural affection. "Kind" often means "nature," and there is a quibble here on its use in that sense, and as the adjective for "kind" or "affectionate."

67 *i' the sun*] *sc.*, of the court. Hamlet has in mind the old ironical proverb "Out of God's blessing into the warm sun" (*i. e.*, from bad to worse).

68 *thy nighted colour*] the gloomy hue of thy countenance or expression. Cf. *Lear*, IV, v, 13, "his *nighted* life."

70 *vailed lids*] downcast eyes.

Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING. 'T is sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father:
But, you must know, your father lost a father,
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow: but to persever
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness; 't is unmanly grief:
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd:
For what we know must be and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart? Fie! 't is a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme

82 *moods*] Thus the early editions. A late Quarto (of 1695) reads *modes*, which Capell and other editors adopt.

92 *obsequious sorrow*] sorrow connected with funeral rites. Cf. *Tit. Andr.*, V, iii, 152: "*obsequious* tears."

persever] persevere, persist. The accent is on the second syllable.

93 *condolement*] lamentation. See note on *Mids. N. Dr.*, I, ii, 22: "I will move storms, I will *condole* in some measure."

95 *incorrect to heaven*] contumacious of heaven.

Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died to-day,
"This must be so." We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father: for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne,
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire:
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin and our son.

QUEEN. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

106–107 *throw to earth . . . unprevailing*] cast away . . . unavailing.

109 *the most immediate to our throne*] The crown of Denmark was elective. Claudius, the late king's brother, had been preferred to Hamlet, the late king's son. Hamlet says (V, ii, 65, *infra*) that his uncle had "popp'd in between the election and my hopes." Hamlet was only next heir in the sense that the sovereign was usually chosen from the family which had already filled the throne, that he was now its only male representative, and that his candidature had the support of the reigning monarch, a fact which is again mentioned (III, ii, 332–3, *infra*).

112 *impart toward you*] communicate to you, offer you. There is a confusion of construction. "With" in line 110 does not harmonise with "impart," and is superfluous.

113 *to school in Wittenberg*] to study in Wittenberg University, a seat of learning founded in 1502, which was familiar to Elizabethan writers as the home of Luther and of Dr. Faustus.

HAM. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.
KING. Why, 't is a loving and a fair reply:
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart: in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the king's rouse the heaven shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

[*Flourish. Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

HAM. O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on 't! ah fie! 't is an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature

127 *And the king's rouse . . . again*] Heaven shall reverberate with the sound of the king's carouse. "Rouse" is sometimes used in the sense of "bumper," "deep draught." Cf. I, iv, 8, *supra:* "The king . . . takes his *rouse*." The king's addiction to drink is strongly emphasised throughout the play.

129 *too too*] a duplicative intensitive. Cf. *Two Gent.*, II, iv, 201: "I love his lady *too too* much."
solid] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *sallied*, which has been defended as meaning "rebellious," formed from the French "saillie," a sally, a violent outbreak.

130 *resolve itself*] dissolve.

131–132 *Or that the Everlasting . . . self-slaughter*] Cf. *Cymb.*, III, iv, 74–75: "Against *self-slaughter* There is a *prohibition so divine*."

132 *canon*] The early editions read *cannon*.

Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead! nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr: so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month —
Let me not think on 't — Frailty, thy name is woman! —
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears: — why she, even she, —
O God! a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer, — married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father

140 *Hyperion to a satyr*] The sun-god (a type of beauty) compared to a satyr (a type of physical ugliness). See III, iv, 56, *infra*, "Hyperion's curls," where Shakespeare seems to identify Hyperion with "flavus Apollo." Ovid (*Metam.*, viii, 565 and xv, 406), following Homer, calls the sun Hyperion. Shakespeare and all the Elizabethan writers defy classical usage by accenting the word on the second syllable instead of the third. See *Hen. V*, IV, i, 271.

141 *beteem*] suffer, permit: a rare usage. In *Mids. N. Dr.*, I, i, 131, Shakespeare uses the word in the commoner sense of "grant."

149 *Niobe*] Ovid, *Metam.*, vi, 146–312, tells the story how Niobe, wife of Amphion, King of Thebes, was changed into a rock from which a perennial stream flowed, owing to her excessive weeping for the death of her twelve children.

150 *discourse of reason*] reasoning faculty, the discursive faculty. Cf. IV, iv, 36, *infra:* "such large *discourse*."

Than I to Hercules: within a month;
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to good:
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

Enter HORATIO, MARCELLUS, *and* BERNARDO

HOR. Hail to your lordship!
HAM. I am glad to see you well:
Horatio, — or I do forget myself. 161
HOR. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.
HAM. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you:
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?
Marcellus?
MAR. My good lord?
HAM. I am very glad to see you. [*To Ber.*] Good even, sir.
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

155 *Had left the flushing*] Had left off or ceased sluicing her smarting eyes. For *in*, the reading of the Quartos, the Folios give *of*. "Flushing" means washing out with water, or sluicing, as in "*flushing* a drain."

163 *I'll change that name with you*] I'll be "your poor servant," you shall be "my good friend."

164 *what make you*] what are you doing? Cf. the German phrase *Was machen Sie?*

167 *Good even*] Often used in the sense of "Good afternoon." In I, i, 174, *supra*, Marcellus makes it plain that this meeting with Hamlet takes place early in the day.

HOR. A truant disposition, good my lord.
HAM. I would not hear your enemy say so,
Nor shall you do my ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.
HOR. My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
HAM. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
HOR. Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.
HAM. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked-meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
My father! — methinks I see my father.
HOR. O where, my lord?
HAM. In my mind's eye, Horatio.
HOR. I saw him once; he was a goodly king.
HAM. He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.
HOR. My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
HAM. Saw? who?

---

170 *hear*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *haue*.

180 *baked-meats*] cold baked pies or pastry, which formed a chief part of the repast commonly given after funerals.

182 *dearest*] greatest or worst. "Dear" is constantly used as an epithet implying excessive emotion whether of hate or love.

HOR. My lord, the king your father.
HAM. The king my father!
HOR. Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear, till I may deliver,
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.
HAM. For God's love, let me hear.
HOR. Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead vast and middle of the night,
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walk'd
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
And I with them the third night kept the watch:
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,

192 *Season your admiration*] Temper your surprise.
193 *attent*] Thus the Second and Third Quartos and the first two Folios. The other early editions have the commoner form *attentive*.
198 *the dead vast . . . of the night*] the still void . . . of the night. Cf. *Temp.*, I, ii, 327: "*vast of night.*" Some early editions needlessly substitute *waste* for *vast*.
200 *at point exactly*] at all points completely.
204–205 *distill'd . . . with the act of fear*] melted, dissolved . . . through the operation of fear.
209 *deliver'd*] reported.

Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes: I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.
HAM. But where was this?
MAR. My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.
HAM. Did you not speak to it?
HOR. My lord, I did,
But answer made it none: yet once methought
It lifted up it head and did address
Itself to motion, like as it would speak:
But even then the morning cock crew loud,
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away
And vanish'd from our sight.
HAM. 'T is very strange.
HOR. As I do live, my honour'd lord, 't is true,
And we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.
HAM. Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch to-night?
MAR. } We do, my lord.
BER. }
HAM. Arm'd, say you?
MAR. } Arm'd, my lord.
BER. }
HAM. From top to toe?
MAR. } My lord, from head to foot.
BER. }
HAM. Then saw you not his face?

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216 *it*] Thus the early editions; the later editions read *its*. "It" is the old form of "its."

HOR. O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.
HAM. What, look'd he frowningly?
HOR. A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
HAM. Pale, or red?
HOR. Nay, very pale.
HAM. And fix'd his eyes upon you?
HOR. Most constantly.
HAM. I would I had been there.
HOR. It would have much amazed you.
HAM. Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?
HOR. While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.
MAR. } Longer, longer.
BER. }
HOR. Not when I saw 't.
HAM. His beard was grizzled? no?
HOR. It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silver'd.
HAM. I will watch to-night;
Perchance 't will walk again.
HOR. I warrant it will.
HAM. If it assume my noble father's person,
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still,

229 *beaver*] the movable portion of the helmet covering the face.
235 *amazed you*] startled you.
247 *tenable*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *treble*, probably a misprint, although it has been doubtfully defended on the awkward ground that the line may mean "Let all three of you keep silence about it."

And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue:
I will requite your loves. So fare you well:
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I'll visit you.

ALL. Our duty to your honour.

HAM. Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;
I doubt some foul play: would the night were come!
Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes. [*Exit.*

SCENE III—A ROOM IN POLONIUS'S HOUSE

Enter LAERTES *and* OPHELIA

LAER. My necessaries are embark'd: farewell:
And, sister, as the winds give benefit
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.

OPH. Do you doubt that?

LAER. For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,

---

255 *I doubt some foul play*] Cf. I, v, 40, *infra:* "O my *prophetic* soul!"

3 *convoy is assistant*] there is convenient means of conveyance.

5–6 *For Hamlet . . . in blood*] As for Hamlet and his careless show of attention to you, regard it as a passing phase, and a whim of impulse.

7 *primy nature*] nature in spring-tide.

Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.

OPH. No more but so?

LAER. Think it no more:
For nature crescent does not grow alone
In thews and bulk; but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now;
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
The virtue of his will: but you must fear,
His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own;
For he himself is subject to his birth:
He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
The safety and health of this whole state,
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
Unto the voice and yielding of that body

---

8 *Forward*] Precocious, premature.

9 *suppliance of a minute*] mere pastime, filling up an idle minute.

11 *crescent*] in the growing stage.

12 *this temple*] the corporeal frame. The word temple suggests (religious) "service" of the next line.

14 *Grows wide withal*] Extends its present scope.

15 *no soil nor cautel*] no blemish nor craft.

17 *His greatness weigh'd*] When one considers the eminence of his rank.

21 *safety*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *sanctity*, for which Theobald substituted *sanity*. *Safety* best suits the context, but must be pronounced trisyllabically.

22–23 *circumscribed . . . body*] limited by the approval and consent of the nation.

Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
As he in his particular act and place
May give his saying deed; which is no further
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmaster'd importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,
And keep you in the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the spring
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary then; best safety lies in fear:
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

OPH. I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,

26–27 *As he . . . deed*] Only so far as his peculiar function and position is likely to enable him to make his promise good. For the Quarto reading *particular act and place*, the Folios read somewhat less intelligibly, *peculiar sect and force*.

32 *unmaster'd*] unrestrained, licentious.

36 *chariest*] most scrupulous.

39–40 *The canker . . . the infants of the spring . . . buttons*] The canker-worm . . . the young plants . . . buds.

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whilst, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.

LAER. O, fear me not.
I stay too long: but here my father comes.

Enter POLONIUS

A double blessing is a double grace;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

POL. Yet here, Laertes! Aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for. There; my blessing with thee!
And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd unfledged comrade. Beware

47 *ungracious*] graceless.
51 *recks not . . . rede*] cares nothing for his own counsel.
58 *these few precepts*] Parallels for much of Polonius' advice appear in "the few precepts" given by Euphues to his friend Philautus in Lyly's didactic romance of *Euphues and his England* (1580, p. 246).
59 *character*] inscribe. The accent is on the second syllable.
60 *unproportion'd*] ugly, ill-proportioned.
61 *vulgar*] cheap, accessible to everybody, at everybody's call.
64 *dull*] blunt the nice sensibilities of.

Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear 't, that the opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man;
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be:
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

LAER. Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POL. The time invites you; go, your servants tend.

69 *Take each man's censure*] Receive all opinions.

71 *not express'd in fancy*] not tricked out in fanciful ornament.

74 *Are . . . chief in that*] Thus the Folios. The First Quarto reads *generall* for *generous*. The Second and Third Quartos substitute *Or* for *Are* (probably a mere misprint) and place a comma after *generous*. If the Folio reading be accepted, *chief* must be treated as a substantive, meaning "eminence." Collier's substitution of *choice* for *chief* is unconvincing. The simplest change is to omit *of a* (improving the metre) and retain the comma of the Quartos after *generous; chief in that* would thus become adverbial, "chiefly in that regard."

77 *husbandry*] thrift, economy.

81 *season this*] ripen this counsel in due season.

83 *invites*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos wrongly read *inuests*, which Theobald defends, explaining it "presses upon."

tend] wait (for you). Cf. IV, iii, 45, *infra*, "The associates *tend*."

LAER. Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well
What I have said to you.
OPH. 'T is in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.
LAER. Farewell. [*Exit.*
POL. What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?
OPH. So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.
POL. Marry, well bethought:
'T is told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you, and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:
If it be so — as so 't is put on me,
And that in way of caution — I must tell you,
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honour.
What is between you? give me up the truth.
OPH. He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
Of his affection to me.
POL. Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?
OPH. I do not know, my lord, what I should think.
POL. Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby,
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly;

94 *put on me*] urged on me.

Or — not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus — you'll tender me a fool.
OPH. My lord, he hath importuned me with love
In honourable fashion.
POL. Ay, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.
OPH. And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.
POL. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,
Even in their promise, as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire. From this time
Be something scanter of your maiden presence;
Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him, that he is young,
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you: in few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,

109 *Running*] Collier's excellent emendation of the Folio reading *Roaming* and the Quarto reading *Wrong*. Theobald preferred *Wringing*.
you'll tender me a fool] you'll make me cut a foolish figure in the public eye.

115 *springes . . . woodcocks*] Cf. *Wint. Tale*, IV, iii, 34: "If the *springe* [*i. e.*, snare or trap] hold, the *cock 's* mine." The woodcock was reckoned the most stupid of birds.

122 *entreatments*] conferences, interviews; like the French "entretien," conversation.

127 *brokers*] agents; frequently used of panders, procurers of girls for immoral purposes.

Not of that dye which their investments show,
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,
The better to beguile. This is for all:
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment leisure,
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to 't, I charge you: come your ways.
OPH. I shall obey, my lord. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV — THE PLATFORM

Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, *and* MARCELLUS

HAM. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.
HOR. It is a nipping and an eager air.
HAM. What hour now?
HOR. I think it lacks of twelve.
MAR. No, it is struck.
HOR. Indeed? I heard it not: it then draws near the season

---

128 *that dye*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *the eye;* "eye" is occasionally used for "tint," "hue."
investments] garments, outward vesture.

130 *bawds*] Theobald's emendation of the reading of all the original editions, *bonds*, which may be defended on the ground that the word might well mean the stringent ties of affianced lovers.

133 *slander any moment leisure*] disgrace any momentary leisure. Thus the Folios and the Second and Third Quartos.

2 *eager*] biting.

Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.
[*A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within.*
What doth this mean, my lord?
HAM. The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.
HOR. Is it a custom?
HAM. Ay, marry, is 't:
But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations:
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
So, oft it chances in particular men,

8 *wake*] hold revel.
rouse] carouse. See note on I, ii, 127, *supra*, and cf. II, i, 58, *infra*.
9 *Keeps wassail . . . reels*] Keeps carousal or festival of drink, and dances the drunken, boisterous dance called "the up-spring" (which was familiar in Germany under the name of Hüpfauf).
17–38 *This . . . scandal*] This passage is omitted from the First Quarto and the Folios. It is only found in the Second and later Quartos.
17–20 *east . . . addition*] exposes us to slander and censure far and wide: they call us drunkards, and "likening us to swine" stain our reputation or good name. For *addition* [*i. e.*, title] cf. II, i, 47, *infra*.
22 *attribute*] repute. Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, II, iii, 125: "much *attribute* he hath."

That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As, in their birth, — wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin, —
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens
The form of plausive manners, that these men, —
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star, —
Their virtues else — be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo —
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault: the dram of eale
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
To his own scandal.

24 *vicious mole of nature*] some small natural disfigurement.

27 *o'ergrowth of some complexion*] excessive growth of some disposition or temperament.

30 *plausive*] praiseworthy, entitled to applause.

32 *Being . . . star*] Being a badge bestowed by nature, or the accident of fortune, *i. e.*, the effect of astrological influence.

33 *Their virtues*] Theobald's correction of the old reading *His* virtues.

36–38 *the dram . . . scandal*] Thus the Second and Third Quartos. The later Quartos substitute *ease* for *eale*. Neither *eale* nor *of a doubt* can be quite satisfactorily explained, though the general sense is obviously that of St. Paul's maxim, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," *i. e.*, the least alloy of baseness negatives the worth of the whole substance, involving it all in discredit. More than forty changes have been suggested. *Eale*, for which *bale* is often substituted, is doubtless a misspelling of "evil." *Doth . . . of a doubt* probably means "infect . . . with doubt or suspicion," *doth* being used as "do" in "To *do* in slander" (*i. e.*, infect with slander) in *Meas. for Meas.*,

Enter Ghost

HOR. Look, my lord, it comes!
HAM. Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,
To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel,
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of nature

I, iii, 43. *Often dout* (*i. e.*, extinguish, efface) has been unconvincingly suggested for *of a doubt;* "dout" being not unfamiliar in this sense in provincial usage. *His own scandal* is, of course, "*its* own scandal."

43 *questionable*] inclined to conversation, willing to be conversed with. Cf. *As You Like It*, III, ii, 347: "an *unquestionable* spirit," *i. e.*, a spirit averse to conversation.

47 *canonized bones*] bones consecrated by canonical rites of burial; "canonized" is accented on the second syllable.

53 *the glimpses*] places illumined by the glimmering light.

54 *we fools of nature*] Thus the old editions. The syntax strictly requires *us* for *we;* but the irregularity is accounted for by Hamlet's agitation. "Fools of nature" means men who are the sport of their own weakness and limitations.

So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?

[*Ghost beckons Hamlet.*

HOR. It beckons you to go away with it,
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.
MAR. Look, with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground:
But do not go with it.
HOR. No, by no means.
HAM. It will not speak; then I will follow it.
HOR. Do not, my lord.
HAM. Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?
It waves me forth again: I'll follow it.
HOR. What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness? think of it:
The very place puts toys of desperation,

59 *impartment*] communication, disclosure.
61 *waves*] beckons.
65 *a pin's fee*] the worth of a pin.
73 *deprive your sovereignty of reason*] dethrone your sovereign reason, deprive you of control of your reason.
75 *toys of desperation*] fancies of despair.

Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.
HAM. It waves me still.
Go on; I'll follow thee.
MAR. You shall not go, my lord.
HAM. Hold off your hands.
HOR. Be ruled; you shall not go.
HAM. My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I call'd: unhand me, gentlemen;
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me:
I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.*

HOR. He waxes desperate with imagination.
MAR. Let's follow; 't is not fit thus to obey him.
HOR. Have after. To what issue will this come?
MAR. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
HOR. Heaven will direct it.
MAR. Nay, let's follow him.

[*Exeunt.*

---

83 *the Nemean lion*] a type of ferocious strength, as in *L. L. L.*, IV, i, 81: "Thus dost thou hear *the Nemean lion* roar."

85 *lets*] hinders.

91 *Nay, let's follow him*] Marcellus disputes Horatio's reliance on heaven's direction, and suggests that they should look after the matter themselves.

SCENE V—ANOTHER PART OF THE PLATFORM

Enter Ghost *and* Hamlet

HAM. Whither wilt thou lead me? speak; I'll go no further.

GHOST. Mark me.

HAM. I will.

GHOST. My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

HAM. Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST. Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

HAM. Speak; I am bound to hear.

GHOST. So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

HAM. What?

GHOST. I am thy father's spirit;
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand an end,

19 *an end*] on end. Thus all the early editions save the First Quarto, which reads *on end.*

Like quills upon the fretful porpentine:
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love —
HAM. O God!
GHOST. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
HAM. Murder!
GHOST. Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.
HAM. Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.
GHOST. I find thee apt;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear:
'T is given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death

20 *porpentine*] a common Elizabethan spelling of "porcupine."

21 *this eternal blazon*] the revelation of the mysteries of eternity. Elsewhere "eternal" is used by Shakespeare for "infernal," *i. e.*, horrible. Cf. *Jul. Caes.*, I, ii, 160: "The *eternal* devil," and *Othello*, IV, ii, 131.

32–33 *the fat weed . . . wharf*] These lines are doubtless a reminiscence of Ovid's *Metam.*, XI, 602 *seq.*, where "rivus aquæ Lethes" is said to flow about the cave of sleep, while "fecunda papavera" (*i. e.*, prolific poppies) grow luxuriantly about its entry. In Golding's translation "the river of forgetfulnesse" is thus associated with the growth of "poppy store With seeded heads and other *weeds* innumerable more." *Fat* may easily be a rendering of "fecunda" in Ovid's "fecunda papavera." *Wharf* can only mean "bank" or "shore."

37 *forged process*] falsified report.

Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.
HAM. O my prophetic soul! 40
My uncle!
GHOST. Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts, —
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce! — won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen:
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage; and to decline 50
Upon a wretch, whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But virtue, as it never will be moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed
And prey on garbage.
But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon, 60
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,

---

40 *my prophetic soul*] Cf. I, ii, 255, *supra:* "I doubt some foul play." Cf. *Sonnet*, cvii, 1; and Euripides' *Andromache*, 1075, *πρόμαντις θυμός*.

52 *To those of mine*] Compared to mine.

61 *secure*] unguarded, unsuspecting. "Secure" is accented on the first syllable.

With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leperous distilment; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body;
And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;
And a most instant tetter bark'd about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
All my smooth body.
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd:
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled;
No reckoning made, but sent to my account

62 *hebenon*] Thus the Folios. All the Quartos read *hebona*. Neither word is known elsewhere. A misprint for "henbane," the familiar poison, is usually suspected. According to Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, xxv, 4), an oil made of henbane seed, if dropped in the ear, confused the brain. On the other hand, Marlowe in *The Jew of Malta*, III, iv, 96, includes in a list of poisons "the juice of Hebon," where Hebon is usually explained as a name of the yew-tree, all the properties of which were reckoned poisonous. Probably Shakespeare had the yew-tree in his mind.

68 *posset*] curdle. Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *possesse*.

69 *eager*] sour, like the French "aigre."

71 *a most . . . bark'd about*] instantaneously a scurf formed a scab about.

77 *Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled*] without having received the sacrament, unprepared, without extreme unction. Cf. *Meas. for Meas.*, III, i, 61: "appointment," *i. e.*, preparation. So "fitted" (*Meas. for Meas.*, II, iv, 40) means "provided with religious consolation."

With all my imperfections on my head:
O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:
Adieu, adieu, adieu! remember me. [*Exit.*

HAM. O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?
And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,

80 *O, horrible! . . . horrible!*] All the early editions give this line to the Ghost. But Garrick and some of his successors transfer it to Hamlet.
81 *nature*] natural affection.
83 *luxury*] lust.
90 *'gins to pale his uneffectual fire*] the glow-worm, in the glimmering dawn, begins to decrease its light, so as to be scarcely visible.
97 *this distracted globe*] Hamlet refers to his own head.
98 *table*] tablet. Cf. line 107, *infra*.

All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter: yes, by heaven!
O most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
My tables, — meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark. [*Writing.*
So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
It is "Adieu, adieu! remember me."
I have sworn 't.

HOR. } [*Within*] My lord, my lord!
MAR. }

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS

MAR. Lord Hamlet!
HOR. Heaven secure him!
HAM. So be it!
MAR. Illo, ho, ho, my lord!
HAM. Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.
MAR. How is 't, my noble lord?
HOR. What news, my lord?
HAM. O, wonderful!

100 *All saws . . . past*] All maxims, all shapes, all past impressions.
107 *tables*] tablets, memorandum books. Cf. line 98, *supra*.
110 *Now to my word*] Now to frame a motto, a cue (to guide future action).
115 *Illo, ho, ho*] A form of hallo.
116 *Hillo . . . come*] A cry of a falconer to his bird.

HOR. Good my lord, tell it.
HAM. No; you will reveal it.
HOR. Not I, my lord, by heaven.
MAR. Nor I, my lord.
HAM. How say you, then; would heart of man once think it?
But you'll be secret?
HOR. } Ay, by heaven, my lord.
MAR. }
HAM. There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he's an arrant knave.
HOR. There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.
HAM. Why, right; you are i' the right;
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:
You, as your business and desire shall point you;
For every man hath business and desire,
Such as it is; and for my own poor part,
Look you, I'll go pray.
HOR. These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.
HAM. I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;
Yes, faith, heartily.
HOR. There's no offence, my lord.
HAM. Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,

127 *circumstance*] circumlocution, ceremony. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, V, i, 90: "out of [*i. e.*, without] *circumstance.*"

136 *by Saint Patrick*] St. Patrick is probably referred to here as the traditional "keeper of purgatory," who has unexpiated crimes under his special observation.

And much offence too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you:
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster 't as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

HOR. What is 't, my lord? we will.

HAM. Never make known what you have seen to-night.

HOR. } My lord, we will not.
MAR. }

HAM. Nay, but swear 't.

HOR. In faith,
My lord, not I.

MAR. Nor I, my lord, in faith.

HAM. Upon my sword.

MAR. We have sworn, my lord, already.

HAM. Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

GHOST. [*Beneath*] Swear.

HAM. Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, true-penny?
Come on: you hear this fellow in the cellarage:
Consent to swear.

HOR. Propose the oath, my lord.

HAM. Never to speak of this that you have seen,
Swear by my sword.

---

138 *honest*] genuine.

148 *Indeed . . . indeed*] Swear definitely upon the cross of my sword. Previously they have only sworn "in faith" verbally, on their conscience.

150 *true-penny*] honest fellow.

GHOST. [*Beneath*] Swear.
HAM. Hic et ubique? then we'll shift our ground.
Come hither, gentlemen,
And lay your hands again upon my sword:
Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword.
GHOST. [*Beneath*] Swear.
HAM. Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?
A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends.
HOR. O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!
HAM. And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
But come;
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on,
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,

156 *Hic et ubique*] Here and everywhere. The snatch of Latinity is due to the common belief that Latin was the language with which ghosts were most familiar. Cf. I, i, 42, *supra*.

163 *pioner*] The word is often used for a working engineer, or "navvy" in attendance on an army.

164 *wondrous strange*] Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, V, i, 59, and *3 Hen. VI*, II, i, 33.

165 *give it welcome*] receive it without questioning, as you would a guest.

167 *your*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *our*, which gives poorer sense.

172 *antic*] fantastic.

As "Well, well, we know," or "We could, an if we would,"
Or "If we list to speak," or "There be, an if they might,"
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me: this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
Swear.

GHOST. [*Beneath*] Swear.

HAM. Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! [*They swear.*] So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you:
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do, to express his love and friending to you,
God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together;
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!
Nay, come, let's go together. [*Exeunt.*

178 *giving out*] hint, intimation.
to note] Thus the early editions. Theobald read *denote*. The grammar is confused; *to* is superfluous; *note* follows *never shall* (line 173).
186 *friending to you*] friendship for you.

ACT SECOND — SCENE I

A ROOM IN POLONIUS'S HOUSE

Enter POLONIUS *and* REYNALDO

POLONIUS

IVE HIM THIS MONEY and these notes, Reynaldo.

REY. I will, my lord.

POL. You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behaviour.

REY. My lord, I did intend it.

POL. Marry, well said, very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris,
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense, and finding

(stage direction) *Enter* POLONIUS *and* REYNALDO] Thus the Folios. The Second and later Quartos read *Enter Old* POLONIUS, *with his man or two.* The First Quarto has *Enter* CORAMBIS *and* MONTANO. POLONIUS is called CORAMBIS, and REYNALDO is called MONTANO all through the First Quarto.

By this encompassment and drift of question
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it:
Take you, as 't were, some distant knowledge of him,
As thus, "I know his father and his friends,
And in part him:" do you mark this, Reynaldo?
REY. Ay, very well, my lord.
POL. "And in part him; but," you may say, "not well:
But if 't be he I mean, he's very wild,
Addicted so and so;" and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank
As may dishonour him; take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.
REY. As gaming, my lord.
POL. Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,
Drabbing: you may go so far.
REY. My lord, that would dishonour him.
POL. Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.

4 *to make inquire*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *you make inquiry.*
7 *Danskers*] Danes, formed from the Danish Dansk, *i. e.*, Denmark.
8 *keep*] lodge, dwell.
10 *encompassment and drift of question*] circuitous method in framing speech.
11–12 *come you . . . touch it*] you will get far nearer the point than more direct inquiry will bring you. Polonius repeats the same idea at line 66: "By indirections find directions out."
19–20 *there put on him . . . please*] credit him with any tale you care to invent.
25 *fencing*] fencing was in ill-repute, and was associated with a tendency to break the peace on small provocation.
28 *season it in the charge*] qualify the accusation.

You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty,
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.

REY. But, my good lord, —

POL. Wherefore should you do this?

REY. Ay, my lord,
I would know that.

POL. Marry, sir, here's my drift,
And I believe it is a fetch of warrant:
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 't were a thing a little soil'd i' the working,
Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
He closes with you in this consequence;

30 *incontinency*] habitual incontinency, which Polonius distinguishes from "drabbing" (line 26).

31 *quaintly*] cleverly.

34 *unreclaimed*] untamed, unbridled.

35 *Of general assault*] To which men generally are liable.

38 *a fetch of warrant*] a device to be depended on. Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *a fetch of wit.*

42 *Your party in converse*] The person you are conversing with. "Converse" is accented on the second syllable.

43 *in the prenominate crimes*] in regard to the aforesaid crimes.

45 *He closes . . . consequence*] He expresses his agreement with you in the following fashion.

"Good sir," or so, or "friend," or "gentleman,"
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.

REY. Very good, my lord.

POL. And then, sir, does he this — he does — what was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave? 51

REY. At "closes in the consequence," at "friend or so," and "gentleman."

POL. At "closes in the consequence," ay, marry;
He closes with you thus: "I know the gentleman;
I saw him yesterday, or t' other day,
Or then, or then, with such, or such, and, as you say,
There was a' gaming, there o'ertook in 's rouse,
There falling out at tennis:" or perchance,
"I saw him enter such a house of sale," 60
Videlicet, a brothel, or so forth.
See you now;
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,

47 *the addition*] the title. Cf. I, iv, 20, *supra.*

49–51 *And then . . . leave?*] Malone first printed this speech as prose. Polonius is growing too incoherent to follow metrical rule.

52–53 *At "closes . . . gentleman"*] The Globe editors treat this speech as prose. The verse halts very much in the original editions.

55 *with you*] Thus the Folios. The Second and later Quartos omit the words.

58 *o'ertook in's rouse*] overcome in drink, intoxicated. For "rouse" cf. I, ii, 127, and I, iv, 8, *supra.*

64 *of wisdom and of reach*] by wisdom and far-reaching policy. "Reach" is similarly used in North's *Plutarch*, ed. 1595, p. 202: "But as for Fabius, he laide many baites for him, and did what he could by all the skill and *reach* he had." (W. J. Craig.)

With windlasses and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out:
So, by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?
REY. My lord, I have.
POL. God be wi' ye; fare ye well.
REY. Good my lord!
POL. Observe his inclination in yourself.
REY. I shall, my lord,
POL. And let him ply his music.
REY. Well, my lord.
POL. Farewell! [*Exit Reynaldo.*

Enter OPHELIA

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?
OPH. O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!
POL. With what, i' the name of God?
OPH. My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,
No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd and down-gyved to his ancle;
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,

65–66 *With windlasses . . . directions out*] With subtle windings and circuitous efforts, by indirect methods, discover direct or certain information. "Windlass" is often thus used in Golding's translation of Ovid; "bias" is a technical term in the game of bowls for the leaden weight on one side of the bowl, which makes it describe a curve when it is set rolling.

68 *You have me*] You take my meaning.

71 *in yourself*] by your own observation.

72 *ply his music*] play his own game.

78 *unbraced*] unbuttoned.

80 *down-gyved . . . ancle*] loosely hanging down at his ankle like fetters.

And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me.
POL. Mad for thy love?
OPH. My lord, I do not know,
But truly I do fear it.
POL. What said he?
OPH. He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so;
At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being: that done, he lets me go:
And with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their helps,
And to the last bended their light on me.
POL. Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love;
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.
What, have you given him any hard words of late?
OPH. No, my good lord, but, as you did command,

103 *fordoes itself*] destroys itself, does itself injury.

I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.
POL. That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgement
I had not quoted him: I fear'd he did but trifle
And meant to wreck thee; but beshrew my jealousy!
By heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king:
This must be known; which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.
Come. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Flourish. Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and* Attendants

KING. Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,

112 *quoted him*] observed him, interpreted his meaning. The Quartos read *coted*, no uncommon form of the same word.
113 *beshrew my jealousy*] curse my suspicion.
115 *cast beyond*] overshoot, overreach.
118–119 *which, being . . . love*] The words are strained. The general meaning is that more trouble may come from hiding the fact of Hamlet's amorous passion than anger (on the part of Hamlet and the king), from disclosing it.
120 *Come*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios omit the word.
1 *Rosencrantz*] Thus Malone. The Quartos read *Rosencrans*, and the First Folio *Rosincrance*.
2 *Moreover that*] Besides that.

The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so call it,
Sith nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both,
That, being of so young days brought up with him
And sith so neighbour'd to his youth and haviour,
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time: so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus,
That open'd lies within our remedy.

QUEEN. Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you,
And sure I am two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
To show us so much gentry and good will
As to expend your time with us a while
For the supply and profit of our hope,
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.

ROS. Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,

10 *dream*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *deem*.

12 *so neighbour'd . . . haviour*] so sympathetically associated with his temperament or disposition in youth. Cf. line 283, *infra*.

22 *gentry*] courtesy, kindness.

24 *For the supply . . . hope*] For the adequate fulfilment of our intentions.

Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

GUIL. But we both obey,
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded.

KING. Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

QUEEN. Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz:
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed son. Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

GUIL. Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him!

QUEEN. Ay, amen!

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and some Attendants.*

Enter POLONIUS

POL. The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully returned.

KING. Thou still hast been the father of good news.

POL. Have I, my lord? I assure my good liege,
I hold my duty as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious king:
And I do think, or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath used to do, that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

30 *in the full bent*] to the full extent, a metaphor from bending the bow in archery.

KING. O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.
POL. Give first admittance to the ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.
KING. Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.
[*Exit Polonius.*
He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.
QUEEN. I doubt it is no other but the main;
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.
KING. Well, we shall sift him.

Re-enter POLONIUS, *with* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS

Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?
VOLT. Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies, which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack,
But better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your highness: whereat grieved,
That so his sickness, age and impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys,
Receives rebuke from Norway, and in fine
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give the assay of arms against your majesty.

56 *the main*] the main cause, the plain fact.
61 *Upon our first*] *sc.*, request.
63 *the Polack*] the Pole, Poles, men of Poland. Cf. I, i, 63, *supra.*
67 *borne in hand*] deluded, deceived.
71 *assay*] trial.

Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee
And his commission to employ those soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack:
With an entreaty, herein further shown, [*Giving a paper.*
That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for this enterprise,
On such regards of safety and allowance
As therein are set down.

KING. It likes us well,
And at our more consider'd time we'll read,
Answer, and think upon this business.
Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour:
Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together:
Most welcome home! [*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.*

POL. This business is well ended.
My liege, and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,

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73 *three thousand*] Thus the Folios and the First Quarto. The other Quartos read *three score thousand.*

79 *regards . . . allowance*] conditions of safety and terms of agreement.

80 *It likes us*] It pleases us.

81 *at our more consider'd time*] when we have more time for reflection.

86–87 *expostulate . . . should be*] expound the character of royalty or the conditions of the kingly state.

What is 't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

QUEEN. More matter, with less art.

POL. Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 't is true: 't is true 't is pity,
And pity 't is 't is true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him then: and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause:
Thus it remains and the remainder thus.
Perpend.
I have a daughter, — have while she is mine, —
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: now gather and surmise. [*Reads.*

"To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia," —

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; "beautified" is a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus: [*Reads.*

"In her excellent white bosom, these," &c.

105 *Perpend*] consider: an affected word like "expostulate" at line 86, *supra.*

109 *beautified*] Thus all the early editions save the First Quarto, which reads *beautiful.* But "beautified" is not uncommon in amatory correspondence of the day.

112 *In her excellent . . . &c.*] Thus Malone. The early editions confuse the punctuation, and the Folio makes these words part of Polonius' comment. Letters of the day often opened with the name of the addressee, followed by the word "these." The present text is supported by *Two Gent.*, III, i, 248–250: "Thy letters may be here, though thou

QUEEN. Came this from Hamlet to her?
POL. Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.
[*Reads.*

"Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.

"O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu. 121

"Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this
machine is to him, HAMLET."

This in obedience hath my daughter shown me;
And more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means and place,
All given to mine ear.
KING. But how hath she
Received his love?
POL. What do you think of me?
KING. As of a man faithful and honourable.
POL. I would fain prove so. But what might you think, 130
When I had seen this hot love on the wing, —
As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me, — what might you,
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,

---

art hence; Which, being writ to me, shall be deliver'd Even *in the milk-white bosom of thy love.*"

122 *machine*] corporeal frame.

If I had play'd the desk or table-book,
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb,
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight;
What might you think? No, I went round to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
"Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;
This must not be:" and then I prescripts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;
And he repulsed, a short tale to make,
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and by this declension
Into the madness wherein now he raves
And all we mourn for.

KING. Do you think this?

QUEEN. It may be, very like.

POL. Hath there been such a time, I'ld fain know that,
That I have positively said "'t is so,"
When it proved otherwise?

135 *play'd . . . table-book*] played the silent recipient of the knowledge.

136 *Or given . . . dumb*] Or given my heart a sign (to be) mute and dumb. "Winking" is often used by Shakespeare in the sense of "shutting the eyes"; but here it is employed in the more modern sense of "giving a clandestine sign."

138 *round*] directly.

140 *out of thy star*] out of thy sphere. Cf. *Tw. Night*, II, v, 128: "*In my stars* I am above thee."

141 *prescripts*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *precepts*.

147 *watch*] state of sleeplessness.

148 *lightness*] lightheadedness.

KING. Not that I know.
POL. [*Pointing to his head and shoulder*] Take this from this, if this be otherwise:
If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.
KING. How may we try it further?
POL. You know, sometimes he walks four hours together
Here in the lobby.
QUEEN. So he does, indeed.
POL. At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:
Be you and I behind an arras then;
Mark the encounter: if he love her not,
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.
KING. We will try it.
QUEEN. But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.
POL. Away, I do beseech you, both away:
I'll board him presently.

[*Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants.*

158 *Within the centre*] In the interior of the earth. The earth was regarded as the centre of the universe.

159 *four*] "Four" was in constant use when some number of indefinitely large size was intended. Cf. V, i, 263, *infra:* "*forty* thousand brothers."

162 *arras*] tapestry hangings, which left ample hiding space between them and the wall.

167 *poor wretch*] a no uncommon term of endearment.

169 *I 'll board*] I 'll accost.

Enter HAMLET, *reading*

O, give me leave: how does my good Lord Hamlet? 170

HAM. Well, God-a-mercy.

POL. Do you know me, my lord?

HAM. Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

POL. Not I, my lord.

HAM. Then I would you were so honest a man.

POL. Honest, my lord!

HAM. Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

POL. That's very true, my lord.

HAM. For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, 180 being a god kissing carrion — Have you a daughter?

POL. I have, my lord.

HAM. Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing; but as your daughter may conceive, — friend, look to 't.

POL. [*Aside*] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter: yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this. I'll speak to him again. — What do you read, my lord? 190

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173 *a fishmonger*] Hamlet probably intends to hint that Polonius is angling or fishing for secrets. But "fishmonger" is sometimes loosely used of one going after women.

181 *god kissing carrion*] Warburton's ingenious correction of the original reading *good kissing carrion*. The latter is intelligible; the dead dog being represented as carrion, which is good to be kissed, *i. e.*, alluring to the sun's reproductive power, and apt to breed (maggots) freely.

186 *How say you?*] What do you mean?

HAM. Words, words, words.

POL. What is the matter, my lord?

HAM. Between who?

POL. I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

HAM. Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward. 203

POL. [*Aside*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. — Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

HAM. Into my grave.

POL. Indeed, that's out of the air. [*Aside*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter. — My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you. 213

HAM. You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that

193 *Between who?*] Hamlet pretends to understand by "matter," " some question in dispute."

195 *rogue*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *slave.*

202 *old as I am*] Hamlet is not talking absolute nonsense here. He uses "old" as denoting age in a general sense; hence "old as I am" means "of my years."

207 *pregnant*] apt.

I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life.

POL. Fare you well, my lord.

HAM. These tedious old fools!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN

POL. You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

ROS. [*To Polonius*] God save you, sir! [*Exit Polonius.*

GUIL. My honoured lord! 221

ROS. My most dear lord!

HAM. My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do you both?

ROS. As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUIL. Happy, in that we are not over-happy; On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAM. Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROS. Neither, my lord. 230

HAM. Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours?

GUIL. Faith, her privates we.

HAM. In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true; she is a strumpet. What's the news?

ROS. None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAM. Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither? 240

226 *indifferent*] average.

238–268 *Let me . . . attended*] This passage is in the Folios only. The Quartos omit it.

GUIL. Prison, my lord!

HAM. Denmark 's a prison.

ROS. Then is the world one.

HAM. A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

ROS. We think not so, my lord.

HAM. Why, then 't is none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

ROS. Why, then your ambition makes it one; 't is too narrow for your mind.

HAM. O God, I could be bounded in a nut-shell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

GUIL. Which dreams indeed are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAM. A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROS. Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAM. Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

ROS. } We'll wait upon you.
GUIL. }

244 *confines*] places of confinement.

257 *the very substance of the ambitious*] the substantial rewards of ambition.

262–263 *Then are . . . shadows*] In this case the men who have nothing are the real substance, and the people who have everything, kings,—and the great men who hold their heads up high—are ineffectual shadows.

HAM. No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of my servants; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

ROS. To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

HAM. Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you: and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

GUIL. What should we say, my lord?

HAM. Why, anything, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

ROS. To what end, my lord?

HAM. That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no.

ROS. [*Aside to Guil.*] What say you?

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266 *No such matter*] No such thing, nothing of the kind.

268 *most dreadfully attended*] Hamlet is thinking of his bad dreams and disturbing memories, rather than of his household attendants.

273 *too dear a halfpenny*] too dear at a halfpenny; are worth less.

283–284 *the consonancy . . . youth*] the harmony attending our relations in youth. The two visitors have already been mentioned at line 12, *supra*, as "so neighbour'd to his youth."

285–286 *a better . . . withal*] a more skilful pleader could urge on you.

HAM. [*Aside*] Nay then, I have an eye of you. — If you love me, hold not off.

GUIL. My lord, we were sent for.

HAM. I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather. I have of late — but wherefore I know not — lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROS. My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAM. Why did you laugh then, when I said "man delights not me"?

ROS. To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from

289 *I have an eye of you*] I have an eye on you, I am watching you closely.

292–294 *I will tell . . . feather*] Hamlet is unwilling to tempt his old friends to a breach of the king's confidence. "Discovery" means "disclosure."

304 *express*] expressive.

you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

HAM. He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' the sere, and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for 't. What players are they?

ROS. Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the tragedians of the city.

HAM. How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

ROS. I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

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315 *coted*] came up with, overtook.

320 *the humorous man*] the actor of "humourist " or character parts, like Falconbridge or Mercutio, whose whimsicality is commonly characterised by a quick temper.

321–322 *the clown . . . sere*] This is found only in the Folios.
whose lungs . . . sere] whose lungs are easily tickled, readily provoked to mirth. "Sere" or "sear" is a technical term in gunnery for the mechanism which grips the trigger. When the "sere" is "tickle," *i. e.*, sensitive to the slightest touch, the gun goes off almost spontaneously.

322–323 *the lady . . . halt for't*] the lady shall pronounce all the licentious talk written for her, or her omissions shall make the metre halt.

326 *travel*] tour in the provinces.

328–329 *I think their inhibition . . . innovation*] I think their exclusion from the London stage is due to the recent innovation in public taste. Reference is made here and in the passages which follow to an incident in the contemporary history of the London stage. A company of boy-actors, known as the "Children of the Chapel" (many of the

HAM. Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so followed?

ROS. No, indeed, are they not.

HAM. How comes it? do they grow rusty? 333

ROS. Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question and are most tyranically clapped for't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages — so they call them — that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither. 340

HAM. What, are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no

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youths being choristers from the Chapel Royal) had during 1602–3 acquired extraordinary popularity by their performances at the Blackfriars Theatre, and the theatre-going public had for the time neglected performances by the adult actors. The matter is more plainly, though more curtly, explained in the First Quarto, 1603, where it is said of "the misfortunes of the tragedians of the city," that "noveltie carries it away, For the principal publike audience that Came to them are turned to private (*i.e.*, amateur) playes And to the humours of children."

333–358 *How . . . load too*] This passage only appears in the Folios.

334–340 *Nay, their endeavour . . . thither*] Nay, the adult actors maintain their average capacity. But there is a brood of children, little chits (young hawks fresh from the nest), that shrilly shout down controversy, and are vociferously applauded for their noise. These children are all the fashion and so abuse the regular actors, that grown-up gallants, the fashionable patrons of the playhouse, are afraid of lampoons (from writers for the children) and scarcely venture inside the theatres.

342–347 *how are they escoted . . . succession?*] Whence do they get their pay or shot? will they pursue the calling of actor only so long as their boys' voices are unbroken? will they not say afterwards if they should

longer than they can sing? will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players, — as it is most like, if their means are no better, — their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession? 347

Ros. Faith, there has been much to do on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy: there was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

Ham. Is't possible?

Guil. O, there has been much throwing about of brains. 355

Ham. Do the boys carry it away?

Ros. Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.

Ham. It is not very strange; for my uncle is king

grow up to become ordinary adult actors, as they are very likely to do, if they have no better means of getting a livelihood, that their literary champions do them ill-service by putting into their mouths abusive speech of the profession to which they are themselves to succeed?

348 *to do*] ado, bustle.

349–352 *the nation . . . question*] the public likes to incite the two parties to controversy: no money was offered for the plot or story of a play unless the dramatic poet (whose services were now chiefly requisitioned by the juvenile actors) attacked in his dialogue the unpopular adult players. "Argument" (*i. e.*, plot) is similarly used III, ii, 227, *infra*.

354–355 *throwing about of brains*] bandying of wits.

356 *carry it away*] carry all before them.

357–358 *Hercules and his load*] Hercules bearing the globe on his back was the sign of the Globe Theatre. Allusion is made here to the temporary decay in that playhouse's fortunes.

of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats a-piece, for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out. [*Flourish of trumpets within.*

GUIL. There are the players.

HAM. Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come then: the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outwards, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUIL. In what, my dear lord?

HAM. I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

360 *make mows*] make insulting grimaces.

362 *his picture in little*] his miniature.

367–368 *the appurtenance . . . ceremony*] the adjuncts of welcome are the formal modes of courtesy.

368–369 *let me comply . . . garb*] let me make compliment of courtesy — observe the formalities of courtesy — with you in this fashion. For "comply" in this sense, cf. V, ii, 182, *infra*.

369 *my extent*] my courteous advance, condescension.

371 *entertainment*] mere board and lodging without the graces of hospitality.

374 *mad north-north-west*] scarcely perceptibly mad; "north-north-west" implies a very slight breeze.

374–375 *when the wind . . . handsaw*] Ray (*Proverbs*, 1768, p. 296) quotes the expression as implying extreme stupidity: "He knows not a hawk from a handshaw." "Handshaw" is a dialectic form of heron-shaw or heron-sew, a young heron. Spenser, *Faerie-Queene*, VI,

Re-enter POLONIUS

POL. Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAM. Hark you, Guildenstern; and you too: at each ear a hearer: that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

ROS. Happily he 's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAM. I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 't was so, indeed.

POL. My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAM. My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome, —

POL. The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAM. Buz, buz!

POL. Upon my honour, —

HAM. Then came each actor on his ass, —

POL. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-

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vii, 9, notices heron-shaw as the common prey of a falcon. A southerly wind was a favourable condition for the sport of hawking.

380 *Happily*] Perhaps.

382–383 *You say right . . . indeed*] Hamlet is misleading Polonius as to what they have been talking about.

389 *Buz, buz!*] a contemptuous interjection implying that the news is stale.

391 *on his ass*] Hamlet is quizzing Polonius' asseveration, "Upon my honour."

pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

HAM. O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

POL. What a treasure had he, my lord? 400

HAM. Why,

> " One fair daughter, and no more,
> The which he loved passing well."

POL. [*Aside*] Still on my daughter.

HAM. Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

POL. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

HAM. Nay, that follows not.

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395 *scene individable . . . unlimited*] a piece having throughout "the same scene" and thus preserving unity of place, or a dramatic poem without restrictions of the kind.

395–396 *Seneca . . . Plautus*] Seneca and Plautus were the standard types respectively of tragedy and comedy. Seneca, whose ten tragedies were translated into English as early as 1581, and Plautus, whose *Menaechmi*, the foundation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, was issued in English in 1595, were much studied, and often acted at Elizabethan universities.

396–397 *For the law . . . liberty*] These words probably mean that the actors were equally excellent in plays obeying the classical law or rules of drama and in farces or romances which were free of the classical convention.

398–413 *O Jephthah . . . like it was*] Hamlet here is quoting snatches of a popular contemporary ballad, called "Jephthah, judge of Israel," who "had one fair daughter, and no more, whom he loved passing well." The ballad is printed in Percy's *Reliques*.

POL. What follows, then, my lord?
HAM. Why,

"As by lot, God wot,"

and then you know,

"It came to pass, as most like it was," —

the first row of the pious chanson will show you more; for look, where my abridgement comes.

Enter four or five Players

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O, my old friend! Why thy face is valanced since I saw thee last; comest thou to beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress! By 'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a

414 *the first row . . . chanson*] the first stanza of the scriptural song. For *pious chanson*, the reading of the Second and later Quartos, the First Folio reads *Pons Chanson*, which has been unconvincingly interpreted as a slovenly allusion to the French phrase "*chanson du Pont Neuf*," a common term for a popular ballad.

415 *abridgement comes*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *abridgements come*. "Abridgement" means a dramatic performance, or pastime. Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, V, i, 39. Hamlet calls the players at line 518, *infra*, "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time." He is here punningly suggesting that the entry of the players must cut short his talk with Polonius.

418 *valanced*] fringed or draped with a beard.

420 *your ladyship*] boys or men, it will be remembered, took women's parts in Shakspeare's time.

chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We 'll e'en to 't like French falconers, fly at any thing we see: we 'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.

FIRST PLAY. What speech, my good lord? 427

HAM. I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 't was caviare to the general: but it was — as I received it, and others, whose judgements in such matters cried in the top of mine — an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affection; but called it an honest

422 *chopine*] a high corked shoe, or thick sole, worn by adult actors, which seems to have been introduced into England from Venice.

422–423 *uncurrent gold . . . ring*] a ring encircled the sovereign's head on contemporary coins, and a crack on the rim which extended to the ring rendered the coin unfit for currency.

424 *like French falconers*] French falconers were famed for their boldness. Every manner of bird was reckoned by them legitimate prey.

426 *a passionate speech*] a speech of feeling or sentiment.

430–431 *'t was caviare to the general*] it was not to the taste of the public at large. For the like use of "general" cf. *Jul. Caes.*, II, i, 12. "Caviare," which is only palatable to English gourmets, is a Russian condiment made of pickled roe of the sturgeon.

432–433 *cried in the top of mine*] overtopped, excelled mine.

435 *sallets*] salads, herbs of piquancy; here, spicy epigrams.

437 *affection*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *affectation*, which is the sense required here.

method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved: 't was Æneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Priam's slaughter: if it live in your memory, begin at this line; let me see, let me see;

"The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast," —

It is not so: it begins with "Pyrrhus."

"The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
With heraldry more dismal: head to foot
Now is he total gules; horridly trick'd
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,

439 *handsome than fine*] beautiful than showy.

440 *Æneas' tale to Dido*] The speech which follows is in the turgid and bombastic style of conventional tragic drama in Shakespeare's early days. The precise incident of the Greek Pyrrhus' slaughter of Priam, King of Troy, comes from Virgil's *Æneid*, ii, 438–558. But Shakespeare treats the Virgilian tale with much freedom. Pyrrhus' experience is also narrated, with variations from the Virgilian text, in Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Act II, Sc. i. Although Shakespeare's borrows very few phrases from Marlowe and Nashe's tragedy, he reproduces its sentiments so closely as to suggest that he was parodying it, whether consciously or unconsciously. But it is not necessary to assume that Shakespeare, when inventing this specimen of early tragedy, was moved by a very definite satiric purpose.

444 *th' Hyrcanian beast*] the tiger. See note on *Merch. of Ven.*, II, vii, 41.

451 *gules*] the heraldic term for "red."

trick'd] smeared; properly, the heraldic term for "sketched."

Baked and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and a damned light
To their lord's murder: roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks."

So, proceed you.

POL. 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

FIRST PLAY. "Anon he finds him
Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command: unequal match'd,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for, lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And like a neutral to his will and matter,

453 *Baked and impasted*] caked.

456 *o'er-sized*] covered as with glue.

467–468 *But with the whiff . . . falls*] Cf. Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido*, II, i, 253–254: "Which he disdaining whiskt his sword about, And with the wind thereof the king fell down."

468 *Ilium*] here Priam's palace at Troy.

474 *painted tyrant*] Cf. *Macb.*, V, viii, 25–27: "We 'll have thee, as our rarer Monsters are, *Painted* upon a pole, and under-writ, Here may you see the tyrant."

475 *like . . . matter*] like one ignoring both his intention and object.

Did nothing.
But as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus' pause
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.
Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod take away her power,
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven
As low as to the fiends!

POL. This is too long.

HAM. It shall to the barber's, with your beard. Prithee, say on: he's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps: say on: come to Hecuba.

FIRST PLAY. "But who, O, who had seen the 'mobled queen—"

HAM. "The mobled queen?"

POL. That's good; "mobled queen" is good.

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478 *the rack*] a bank of floating cloud.

481 *the region*] the sky, the upper air.

489 *fellies*] the pieces of wood forming the rim of the wheel.

494 *a jig*] a burlesque dialogue in verse; not here in its more ordinary sense of a boisterous dance.

496 *mobled*] muffled, veiled. The uncommon word is more often spelt "mobbled" or "mabled."

FIRST PLAY. "Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames
With bisson rheum; a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood; and for a robe,
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up:
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounced:
But if the gods themselves did see her then,
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
Unless things mortal move them not at all,
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven
And passion in the gods."

POL. Look, whether he has not turned his colour and has tears in's eyes. Prithee, no more.

HAM. 'T is well; I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon. Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

500 *bisson rheum*] blinding tears. "Bisson" commonly means "half-blind" or "near-sighted."

502 *o'er-teemed*] exhausted with child-bearing.

511 *milch*] moist (as milk). Cf. Drayton's *Polyolbion*, Bk. XIII, line 171: "the *milch* dew." Dryden's *Pref. to Troil. and Cress.* (1679) condemns the extravagance of this whole passage and is especially severe on the absurdity of drawing milk from burning eyes.

512 *passion*] compassion, pity.

517 *bestowed*] lodged.

518 *abstract . . . chronicles of the time*] epitomes of current experience.

POL. My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

HAM. God's bodykins, man, much better: use every man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

POL. Come, sirs.

HAM. Follow him, friends: we 'll hear a play to-morrow. [*Exit Polonius with all the Players but the First.*] Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you play the Murder of Gonzago?

FIRST PLAY. Ay, my lord.

HAM. We 'll ha 't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in 't, could you not?

FIRST PLAY. Ay, my lord.

HAM. Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. [*Exit First Player.*] My good friends, I 'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

ROS. Good my lord!

HAM. Ay, so, God be wi' ye! [*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*] Now I am alone.
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,

535 *some . . . lines*] Cf. III, ii, 79, *infra:* "one speech." Whether Hamlet's "dozen or sixteen lines," figure in the fragment of the acted play in Act III, Sc. ii, *infra*, cannot be determined. It has been ingeniously argued that the murderer Lucianus' last speech of six lines in the acted piece (III, ii, 249–254), is the opening passage of Hamlet's interpolation.

But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?

546 *own*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *whole*. *Conceit* means imagination.

547 *wann'd*] grew wan or pale. Thus the Cambridge editors; the Quartos read *wand*, and the Folios, *warm'd*. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, II, i, 21: "thy *waned* lip," where the Folios read *wand*.

557 *the free*] the innocent. Cf. III, ii, 236: "*free* souls."

561 *peak*] mope. Cf. *Macb.*, I, iii, 23: "*peak* and pine."

562 *John-a-dreams . . . cause*] any dreamer, unready or ineffectual in my cause. "John-a-dreams" may be Shakespeare's own coinage.

565 *defeat*] ruin, destruction.

Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?
Ha!
'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion!
Fie upon 't! foh! About, my brain! Hum, I have heard
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently

572–573 *lack gall . . . bitter*] lack the spirit that makes one feel the bitterness of tyranny. The gentleness of pigeons and doves was commonly assigned to the absence from their composition of gall, which was reckoned the source of courage.

574 *region kites*] birds of prey inhabiting the upper air.

575 *Remorseless . . . kindless*] Pitiless . . . unnatural.

579 *father*] The first three Quartos and the Folios omit *father*, which the Fourth Quarto first inserted.

584 *About*] Get to work.

They have proclaim'd their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil; and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king. [*Exit.*

590–594 *I'll have . . . course*] Many stories of the detection of crime in this way at a theatre were quoted by Shakespeare's contemporaries. Two are given in Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors*, 1612. (Shakesp. Soc. ed. pp. 57–59.)

593 *tent . . . blench*] probe . . . flinch.

600 *relative*] pertinent, definite.

ACT THIRD — SCENE I

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN

KING

AND CAN YOU, BY NO drift of circumstance
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

ROS. He does confess he feels himself distracted,
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

GUIL. Nor do we find him forward to be sounded;
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.

QUEEN. Did he receive you well?
ROS. Most like a gentleman.
GUIL. But with much forcing of his disposition.
ROS. Niggard of question, but of our demands
Most free in his reply.
QUEEN. Did you assay him
To any pastime?
ROS. Madam, it so fell out that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way: of these we told him,
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it: they are about the court,
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.
POL. 'T is most true:
And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties
To hear and see the matter.
KING. With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

---

1 *by no drift of circumstance*] by no circuitous method. Cf. II, i, 10, *supra*: "*drift* of question."

3 *Grating*] Disturbing.

13 *Niggard of question*] Reluctant to begin the talk. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern give a somewhat garbled account of their interview with Hamlet in Act II, Sc. ii, and are concealing the awkward fact of his discovery that they *were* sent for.

14 *assay*] tempt, challenge.

17 *o'er-raught*] overtook; the preterite of "o'er reach." Thus all the early editions save the Third Folio, which reads *o'ertook*.

Ros. We shall, my lord.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

KING. Sweet Gertrude, leave us too;
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 't were by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia:
Her father and myself, lawful espials,
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If 't be the affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

QUEEN. I shall obey you:
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness: so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

OPH. Madam, I wish it may. [*Exit Queen.*

POL. Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves. [*To Ophelia*] Read on this book;
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this, —
'T is too much proved — that with devotion's visage

---

29 *closely*] secretly.

31 *Affront*] Meet, encounter. Cf. line 34, *infra*.

32 *lawful espials*] legitimate onlookers. Thus the Folios. The words are omitted from the Quartos.

43 *Gracious*] My gracious lord. Cf. IV, vii, 43, *infra:* "High and mighty."

44 *this book*] a book of devotion, as the references below prove.

And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

KING. [*Aside*] O, 't is too true!
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word:
O heavy burthen!

POL. I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.

[*Exeunt King and Polonius.*

Enter HAMLET

HAM. To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 't is nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die: to sleep;

52 *to the thing that helps it*] when compared with the beautifying enamel.

53 *painted word*] falsely coloured word.

56 *To be, or not to be*] To live or commit suicide.

59 *to take arms . . . troubles*] This looks like a mixed metaphor, though Aristotle (*Ethic. Eudem.*, Bk. III, ch. i), Ælian in his Histories, and some later Greek writers describe a practice "among the Celts when maddened by anger" of taking up arms against the waves of the sea and of suffering themselves to be drowned rather than retreat from the incoming tide. It is doubtful if Shakespeare is here drawing upon classical learning, though Ælian was accessible in Abraham Fleming's translation, 1576. He more probably used "sea" in the sense of "mass" as in "*sea* of joys" (*Pericles*, V, i, 191), "*sea* of glory" (*Hen. VIII*, III, ii, 360), "*sea* of care" (*Lucrece*, 1100); "Sea of troubles" too was a common phrase in other languages. Cf. κακῶν θάλασσα, in Æschylus, *Septem contra Thebas*, lines 64 and 114.

No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 't is a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,

65 *rub*] obstruction, obstacle. "Rub" was a technical term for any obstruction on the course in the game of bowls.

67 *this mortal coil*] probably "the turmoil of mortal life," with a possible suggestion of "fleshly bonds," which encase the soul like a coil of rope and are shuffled off at death.

68 *there's the respect*] that's the consideration.

71 *proud*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read, less pointedly, *poor*.

72 *despised*] slighted. Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *dispriz'd*, *i. e.*, undervalued.

75 *quietus*] a legal term for settlement of an account. Shakespeare uses the word elsewhere only in *Sonnet* cxxvi, 12.

76 *a bare bodkin*] Probably "a mere needle," though the interpretation "an unsheathed dagger" has good authority.

fardels] bundles, burdens. Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *these Fardles*.

77 *grunt*] groan. This is often the meaning of "grunt" in Eliza-

But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will, 80
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

---

bethan English. In the text of the 1676 Quarto "groan" was first substituted, and is the reading adopted in the transcript (*c.* 1680) of the words with musical accompaniment found among the Pepysian manuscripts in Magdalene College, Cambridge. Cf. *Jul. Caes.*, IV, i, 22, "*to groan and sweat* under the business."

79 *bourn*] boundary. The general sentiment is common among poets. Cf. Catullus, III, 11–12: "Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum Illuc, unde negant redire quemquam." Marlowe, *Edward II*, V, vi, 65–66, describes a dying man as "a traveller" who "goes to discover countries yet unknown." Hamlet seems to forget that he has just seen the ghost of his dead father, but "returns" may well be explained as "comes back to abide."

83 *conscience*] introspection, speculation.

85 *thought*] anxiety.

86 *pitch*] height, technically the summit of the falcon's flight. Thus the Quartos. Cf. *Tw. Night*, I, i, 12: "of what validity and *pitch* soe'er." The Folios read *pith*. Cf. I, iv, 22, *supra*, "*pith* and marrow."

87 *awry*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios weakly substitute *away*.

89 *orisons*] prayers.

OPH. Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?
HAM. I humbly thank you: well, well, well.
OPH. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.
HAM. No, not I;
I never gave you aught.
OPH. My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.
HAM. Ha, ha! are you honest?
OPH. My lord?
HAM. Are you fair?
OPH. What means your lordship?
HAM. That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.
OPH. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?
HAM. Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the

103 *honest*] The word means "virtuous" as well as "truthful."
107–108 *your honesty . . . beauty*] Your virtue should not suffer any one to make appeal to your beauty. To preserve your chastity you must forbid any one to talk to you of your beauty.
109–110 *Could beauty . . . honesty ?*] Ophelia misunderstands Hamlet's remark; but Hamlet in his retort turns her misinterpretation to his own purpose. "Commerce" means "intercourse."

force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

OPH. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAM. You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

OPH. I was the more deceived. 120

HAM. Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth? We are arrant knaves all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where 's your father? 130

OPH. At home, my lord.

HAM. Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in 's own house. Farewell.

OPH. O, help him, you sweet heavens!

117–119 *virtue cannot . . . of it*] virtue cannot so impregnate our old wayward nature with sincerity but we shall still smack of our original taint (of insincerity).

122 *indifferent honest*] fairly honest.

124–127 *I am very proud . . . act them in*] These self-accusations ironically express the misconceptions that might be formed of his conduct by one who is ignorant of its true motives.

130 *Where 's your father?*] Hamlet either catches sight of Polonius behind the arras, or has an intuition that Ophelia is playing her father's game.

HAM. If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

OPH. O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAM. I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on 't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. [*Exit.*

OPH. O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword:
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

142 *paintings*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *pratlings*, which is speciously supported by "lisp" in line 144. But Shakespeare is clearly referring to fashionable women's artificial toilet-practices.

143 *face*] Thus the Quartos. The Folio reading *pace* is a mere misprint.

144 *you jig*] you practice affectations in your walk.

145–146 *make your wantonness your ignorance*] excuse your wanton affectation on the score of innocent ignorance.

148 *all but one*] an allusion to the king.

152 *expectancy*] hope.

153 *The glass . . . form*] The mirror of fashion and the model of deportment. Cf. *2 Hen. IV*, II, iii, 31–32 (of Hotspur): "He was the mark and *glass*, copy and *form* That *fashion'd* others."

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Re-enter KING *and* POLONIUS

KING. Love! his affections do not that way tend;
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger: which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: — he shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply the seas and countries different
With variable objects shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on 't?

POL. It shall do well: but yet do I believe

158 *out of tune*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos misprint *out of time.*

159 *That unmatch'd . . . youth*] The unmatched form and shape of youth in his bloom. For "blown" cf. III, iii, 81, "crimes broad *blown*" (*i. e.*, in full bloom).

166 *the hatch and the disclose*] the hatching and the coming out of the shell. Both words are used technically of young birds chipping the shell at birth.

175 *From fashion of himself*] Out of keeping with his normal bearing.

The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia!
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please;
But, if you hold it fit, after the play,
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his grief: let her be round with him;
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,
To England send him, or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

KING. It shall be so:
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — A HALL IN THE CASTLE

Enter HAMLET *and* Players

HAM. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear

183 *To show his grief*] To disclose his grievance.

185 *If she find him not*] If she does not discover, fails to detect, his secret.

6–7 *your passion*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios omit *your*.

7 *acquire and beget*] Both words mean much the same thing. "Beget" was in constant use as an intensitive form of "get," *i. e.*, get firm hold of, procure. Cf. T. T.'s dedication of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*: "the only begetter," *i. e.*, procurer.

a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it. 14

First Play. I warrant your honour.

Ham. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but

9 *robustious*] violent, blustering. So used in *Hen. V*, III, vii, 144, of a mastiff's onset.

periwig-pated] The wearing of wigs was confined entirely to actors at this date.

10 *the groundlings*] spectators in the pit or cheapest part of the theatre, where there was only standing room at a penny apiece.

11 *capable of*] capable of apprehending. Cf. III, iv, 127, *infra*.

13 *o'erdoing Termagant . . . Herod*] Both Termagant (a fabulous monster worshipped by Saracens) and Herod were familiar characters in the old mystery plays, and were suffered to introduce any amount of melodramatic bluster in their presentation.

20 *from the purpose*] contrary to the purpose.

23–24 *the very age . . . pressure*] (to delineate) the precise conditions of things at the date in their literal shape. "Pressure" means impression as of a mould.

24–25 *overdone or come tardy off*] exaggerated or inadequately presented.

make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably. 34

First Play. I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir.

Ham. O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them: for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready. [*Exeunt Players.* 44

Enter Polonius, Rosencrantz, *and* Guildenstern

How now, my lord! will the king hear this piece of work?

Pol. And the queen too, and that presently.

Ham. Bid the players make haste. [*Exit Polonius.*] Will you two help to hasten them?

26–27 *the censure . . . allowance*] the opinion of whom must in your estimation.

34 *abominably*] The word was mistakenly derived from "ab homine," *i. e.*, foreign to man. Hence its pertinence to the present context.

35 *indifferently*] fairly well. Cf. III, i, 122, *supra*: "*indifferent* honest."

44 *Go, make you ready*] The first Quarto (1603) makes Hamlet continue this speech with some curious specimens of the extemporised buffoonery of clowns against which he is giving warning.

ROS. } We will, my lord.
GUIL. }

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

HAM. What ho! Horatio!

Enter HORATIO

HOR. Here, sweet lord, at your service.
HAM. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.
HOR. O, my dear lord, —
HAM. Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself: for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgement are so well commingled

53 *my conversation coped withal*] my intercourse encountered.
58 *candied tongue*] the sugary tongue (of the sycophant).
59 *pregnant*] ready, supple.
60 *thrift*] profit, good success. Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, I, i, 175: "a mind presages me such *thrift*."
67 *blood and judgement*] passion and reason, heart and mind. Cf. IV, iv, 58, *infra*, "my reason and my blood."

That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. Something too much of this.
There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death:
I prithee, when thou seest that act a-foot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe my uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
And after we will both our judgements join
In censure of his seeming.

HOR. Well, my lord:
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

HAM. They are coming to the play: I must be idle:
Get you a place.

77 *with the very comment . . . soul*] with all thy powers of observation.
79 *one speech*] Cf. II, ii, 535, *supra*, and III, ii, 249–54, *infra*.
82 *Vulcan's stithy*] Vulcan's forge or anvil.
85 *In censure of his seeming*] In estimating his appearance.
88 *I must be idle*] I must seem to have no purpose, behave as if I had no interest in what is going forward.

Danish march. A flourish. Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and other Lords attendant, with the Guard carrying torches*

KING. How fares our cousin Hamlet? 90

HAM. Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

KING. I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

HAM. No, nor mine now. [*To Polonius*] My lord, you played once i' the university, you say?

POL. That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.

HAM. What did you enact? 99

POL. I did enact Julius Cæsar: I was killed i' the Capitol; Brutus killed me.

HAM. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there. Be the players ready?

91–92 *of the chameleon's dish: . . . air*] It was an old belief that the chameleon lived on nothing but air. Cf. *Two Gent.*, II, i, 160–161: "Though the chameleon, Love, can feed on the air."

92 *promise-crammed*] filled with specious assurances of love and respect, such as the king had given Hamlet, *supra*, I, ii, 108 *seq.*

100 *Julius Cæsar*] Cæsar's death was a frequent subject of university plays throughout Europe. One was performed at Oxford in 1582. Shakespeare's play of *Julius Cæsar* immediately preceded the production of *Hamlet;* it was probably written in 1601.

100–101 *killed i' the Capitol*] A popular fallacy, which Shakespeare adopted in his tragedy, represents the Capitol as the scene of Cæsar's murder. It really took place in the "curia Pompeii," a room of assembly adjoining Pompey's theatre in the Campus Martius. See note on *Jul. Caes.*, I, iii, 126.

103 *calf*] dolt. Cf. V, i, 112, *infra.*

Ros. Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.
Queen. Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.
Ham. No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.
Pol. [*To the King*] O, ho! do you mark that?
Ham. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?
[*Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*
Oph. No, my lord.
Ham. I mean, my head upon your lap? 110
Oph. Ay, my lord.
Ham. Do you think I meant country matters?
Oph. I think nothing, my lord.
Ham. That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
Oph. What is, my lord?
Ham. Nothing.
Oph. You are merry, my lord.
Ham. Who, I?
Oph. Ay, my lord. 119
Ham. O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within 's two hours.
Oph. Nay, 't is twice two months, my lord.
Ham. So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two

112 *country matters*] rusticity, rudeness, coarseness.
125 *a suit of sables*] probably a rich dress trimmed with sable fur, which was quite unsuited for mourning attire. Hamlet obviously means that he is going to leave off black garments. But at IV, vii, 80, *infra*, *sables* is noticed as the appropriate dress of "settled age." Hamlet may be also ironically hinting here that the interval of two months since his father's death is reckoned of such length at his

months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by 'r lady, he must build churches then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is, "For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot." 130

Hautboys play. The dumb-show enters

Enter a King *and a* Queen *very lovingly; the* Queen *embracing him, and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck: lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the* King's *ears, and exit. The* Queen *returns; finds the* King *dead, and makes passionate action. The* Poisoner, *with some two or three* Mutes, *comes in again, seeming to lament with*

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uncle's court that he has grown within the time into quite an old man, and ought to divest himself of his youthful clothes and assume the dignified garb of a veteran.

129 *not thinking on*] not to be thought of, to be forgotten.

130 *For, O, . . . forgot*] See note on *L. L. L.*, III, i, 26.

(stage direction) *Hautboys play. The dumb-show enters . . . love*] Thus the Folios. There are slight variations in the text of the Quartos; but none are of great importance. A dumb-show of this precise pattern is unknown elsewhere. In some early plays, cf. *Gorboduc* (1565) and *Jocasta* (1575), each act is preceded by a "tableau vivant" in which allegorical figures or mythological personages suggest in silent action the moral of the ensuing drama. Elsewhere, *e. g.*, *Pericles*, Act II, Sc. i, Act III, Sc. i, mute exhibitions are given of necessary incidents which were not otherwise represented. Here the acting of the coming play in silent gesture would seem designed by Hamlet to make his purpose doubly sure. The king in any case proves a match for the first ordeal.

her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner *wooes the* Queen *with gifts: she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love.* [*Exeunt.*

OPH. What means this, my lord?

HAM. Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief.

OPH. Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

Enter Prologue

HAM. We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all.

OPH. Will he tell us what this show meant?

HAM. Ay, or any show that you'll show him: be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means. 141

OPH. You are naught, you are naught: I'll mark the play.

PRO. For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.

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132 *miching mallecho*] sneaking wickedness or mischief. Thus Malone. The Folios read *Miching Malicho*, the First Quarto *myching Mallico*, and the other Quartos *munching Mallico*. "Mich" is a recognised word meaning "to play the sneak or skulk." "Micher" is used in the sense of truant in *1 Hen. IV*, II, iv, 396. "Mallecho" is from the Spanish "malhecho," wickedness, indecorous behaviour. Minsheu translates "malefactum." Shirley employs the word in *The Gentleman of Venice*, Act III, Sc. iv: "Be humble, thou man of *Mallecho*, or thou diest."

142 *naught*] naughty, improper.

HAM. Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?
OPH. 'T is brief, my lord.
HAM. As woman's love.

Enter two Players, King *and* Queen

P. KING. Full thirty times hath Phœbus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been,
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

P. QUEEN. So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!
But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love holds quantity,
In neither aught, or in extremity.

147 *the posy of a ring*] short mottoes engraved inside a ring.

150 *cart*] chariot. "Cart" has here an archaic flavour. The style of the "play" is intentionally stilted, and seems fashioned on Elizabethan renderings of Senecan drama.

151 *Neptune's . . . ground*] Bombastic phrases for "sea" and "earth."

155 *commutual*] mutually.

161–162 *must: For*] Here the Folios omit a line which is found only in the Quartos: *For women feare too much, euen as they loue.* It is probable that the author intended to erase this line, which he in effect refashioned in the one that follows it. The next line begins in the Quartos with *And*, for which the Folios read *For.*

162–163 *holds quantity . . . in extremity*] have equal capacity, have the same measure of strength. Neither is worth reckoning at all, or both are at the zenith of intensity. Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, I, i, 232: "Things base and vile, *holding no quantity*," and note.

Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know,
And as my love is sized, my fear is so:
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear,
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

P. KING. Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;
My operant powers their functions leave to do:
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, beloved; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou —

P. QUEEN. O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

HAM. [*Aside*] Wormwood, wormwood.

P. QUEEN. The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love:
A second time I kill my husband dead,
When second husband kisses me in bed.

P. KING. I do believe you think what now you speak,
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth but poor validity:
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary 't is that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt:

169 *leave*] cease.
177 *instances*] motives, inducements.
178 *base respects of thrift*] contemptible considerations of profit.
184 *poor validity*] feeble strength.
187 *Most necessary*] Quite inevitable.

What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy:
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
This world is not for aye, nor 't is not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change,
For 't is a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark his favourite flies;
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies:
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend;
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try
Directly seasons him his enemy.
But, orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contrary run,
That our devices still are overthrown,
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own:

191–192 *The violence . . . destroy*] That which either grief or joy enacts or resolves to perform when at the height of its violence is cancelled when the emotion subsides.

193–194 *Where joy . . . accident*] The meaning is that the temperament most capable of grief is also most capable of joy, and turns from the one emotion to the other on very slight provocation.

196 *our loves*] the love we excite in others.

199 *favourite*] Thus all the early editions save the First Folio, which has *fauourites*, the plural for the singular, with very cacophonous effect. Yet the plural well suggests a swarm of sycophants scattering in flight. There are many instances in Shakespeare of a plural subject with a singular verb. Cf. line 162, *supra*.

204 *Directly seasons . . . enemy*] Quickly matures his enmity, brings out in him his true character of enemy.

So think thou wilt no second husband wed,
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.
P. QUEEN. Nor earth to me give food nor heaven light!
Sport and repose lock from me day and night!
To desperation turn my trust and hope!
An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope!
Each opposite, that blanks the face of joy,
Meet what I would have well and it destroy!
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

HAM. If she should break it now!

P. KING. 'T is deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here a while;
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep. [*Sleeps.*
P. QUEEN. Sleep rock thy brain;
And never come mischance between us twain! [*Exit.*

HAM. Madam, how like you this play?
QUEEN. The lady doth protest too much, methinks.
HAM. O, but she'll keep her word.
KING. Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in 't?
HAM. No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' the world.

213–214 *To desperation . . . my scope!*] These lines are found only in the Quartos. The Folios omit them. For the Quarto reading *And Anchors*, Theobald substituted *An anchor's*. "Anchor" means "anchorite." The line signifies "May an anchorite or hermit's prison fare be my lot!"

215 *Each opposite . . . joy*] Every harm or trouble that blanches the countenance habituated to joy.

227 *argument*] plot or story. Cf. II, ii, 350, *supra*.

KING. What do you call the play?

HAM. The Mouse-trap. Marry, how? Tropically. This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the duke's name; his wife, Baptista: you shall see anon; 't is a knavish piece of work: but what o' that? your majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not: let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.

Enter LUCIANUS

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

OPH. You are as good as a chorus, my lord. 239

HAM. I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.

OPH. You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

232 *The Mouse-trap*] The play is the trap set to catch the mouse of the king's conscience.

Tropically] Metaphorically, figuratively. The First Quarto reads, punningly, *trapically*.

234 *Baptista*] Usually a man's name, as in *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Baptista is father of Katharine.

236 *free souls*] innocent souls. Cf. II, ii, 557, *supra*, and *Wint. Tale*, I, ii, 112: "a *free* face."

237 *let the galled jade . . . unwrung*] a familiar proverb.

239 *a chorus*] the actor appointed in the older Elizabethan plays to explain the progress of the plot between the acts. See Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

240–241 *interpret . . . puppets*] Cf. *Two Gent.*, II, i, 84–85: "O exceeding *puppet!* Now will he interpret her." In puppet or marionette shows, which were popular at the time, explanatory words were spoken by an attendant who bore the title of "interpreter of the puppets." Cf. Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* (Works, ed. Grosart, vol. xii, p. 132): "it was I that pende the Moral of mans wit, the Dialogue of Diues, and for seauen yeeres space was absolute *interpreter* of the *puppets*."

HAM. It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge.

OPH. Still better, and worse.

HAM. So you must take your husbands. Begin, murderer; pox, leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come: the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.

LUC. Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property,
On wholesome life usurp immediately.
[*Pours the poison into the sleeper's ear.*

HAM. He poisons him i' the garden for his estate. His name 's Gonzago: the story is extant, and written in very choice Italian: you shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

OPH. The king rises.

246 *So*] *i. e.*, "for better and for worse."
So . . . husbands] Thus Pope, after the First Quarto reading, *So you must take your husband.* The other Quartos and the Folios have, less intelligibly, *So you mistake your husbands.*

248 *the croaking raven . . . revenge*] an inexact quotation with satirical intent of bombastic lines ("The screeking *raven* sits *croaking* for revenge, Whole heads of beasts comes *bellowing* for revenge") from *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, 1594 (*Shakespeare's Library* (1875), Part II, vol. I, p. 117).

249–254 *Thoughts black . . . immediately*] Possibly these are the opening lines of the passage which Hamlet promised to interpolate into the piece. See note on II, ii, 535, *supra.*

250 *Confederate season*] Time conspiring with the criminal.

252 *Hecate's ban*] Hecate is here introduced as the divine patroness of witchcraft. Cf. *Macbeth*, III, v, 1, and note.

254 *usurp*] let them all seize.

HAM. What, frighted with false fire! 260
QUEEN. How fares my lord?
POL. Give o'er the play.
KING. Give me some light. Away!
POL. Lights, lights, lights!
[Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.

HAM. Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
Thus runs the world away. 268

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers — if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me — with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

260 *false fire*] fire signals employed to deceive an enemy.

269 *a forest of feathers*] an actor's ornate costume. Rich apparel was commonly worn by leading actors both on and off the stage, and heavy and expensive plumage often adorned their hats. Cf. Chapman's *Monsieur D'Olive*, 1606, Act III, Sc. i: "I carry a whole *forest of feathers* with me."

270 *turn Turk*] apostatise, undergo desperate change.

270–271 *with two Provincial roses . . . shoes*] with ribbons made into rosettes resembling roses of Provence (or Provins), on my slashed shoes. "Provincial" was a common epithet of the large damask French rose. *Razed* is the reading of the Quartos. The Folios read *rac'd*, *i. e.*, streaked. But there is better authority for *razed* as applied to shoes.

271–272 *get me . . . players*] obtain for me a partnership in a company of players. Hamlet suggests in this speech that his success in revising and producing the play would entitle him, were he now to turn actor, and assume the splendid raiment of the professional player, to receive as a reward a share in an acting company's profits. It was the actor-

HOR. Half a share.
HAM. A whole one, I.

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here
A very, very — pajock.

HOR. You might have rhymed.
HAM. O good Horatio, I 'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive? 281
HOR. Very well, my lord.
HAM. Upon the talk of the poisoning?
HOR. I did very well note him.
HAM. Ah, ha! Come, some music! come, the recorders!

For if the king like not the comedy,
Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy.

Come, some music!

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dramatist Shakespeare's dramatic triumphs which led his colleagues to present him with an important share in the profits of their performances at the Globe Theatre.

278 *pajock*] Thus substantially all the early editions, though the First Folio and early Quartos substitute *i* for *j*. "Pajock" or "peajock" is a dialect form of "peacock," a bird popularly credited with thievish and lustful propensities. Hamlet substitutes in his excitement this full-sounding word for "ass" which the rhymes of the stanza obviously require. Sir Henry Irving made Hamlet carelessly toy with a fan of peacock's feathers which Ophelia had dropped. When his eye falls on the fan, he tossed it away with the exclamation *pajock*.

285–286 *recorders*] long flutes or flageolets. At lines 342 and 361, *infra*, Hamlet calls the same instrument the "pipe."

288 *perdy*] "par Dieu," by God.

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN

GUIL. Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.
HAM. Sir, a whole history.
GUIL. The king, sir, —
HAM. Ay, sir, what of him?
GUIL. Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.
HAM. With drink, sir?
GUIL. No, my lord, rather with choler.
HAM. Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to the doctor; for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.
GUIL. Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.
HAM. I am tame, sir: pronounce.
GUIL. The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.
HAM. You are welcome.
GUIL. Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment: if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.
HAM. Sir, I cannot.

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294 *distempered*] indisposed, agitated.
298–299 *to put him to his purgation*] The phrase means both "to give him purging medicine," and to set in motion a legal process for clearing an accused person.
301 *frame*] good order, coherence.

GUIL. What, my lord?

HAM. Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased: but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command; or rather, as you say, my mother: therefore no more, but to the matter: my mother, you say, —

ROS. Then thus she says; your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

HAM. O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart.

ROS. She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

HAM. We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

ROS. My lord, you once did love me.

HAM. So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

ROS. Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do surely bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

HAM. Sir, I lack advancement.

ROS. How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?

HAM. Ay, sir, but "while the grass grows," — the proverb is something musty.

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318 *amazement and admiration*] bewilderment and astonishment.

325 *trade*] business.

327 *these pickers and stealers*] these hands; an allusion to the admonition of the Church Catechism "to keep my hands from *picking and stealing*."

334 "*while the grass grows*"] The old proverb ends "the silly horse he starves."

Re-enter Players *with recorders*

O, the recorders! let me see one. To withdraw with you: — why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

GUIL. O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

HAM. I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

GUIL. My lord, I cannot.

HAM. I pray you.

GUIL. Believe me, I cannot.

HAM. I do beseech you.

GUIL. I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAM. It is as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

336 *recorders*] See note on line 286, *supra.*

336–337 *To withdraw with you*] Capell marked these words as "Aside." Malone added the direction "Taking Guildenstern aside." The phrase means "Let me have a private word with you," and is probably addressed to Guildenstern at the moment that Hamlet takes a recorder from the hand of one of the players.

337–338 *to recover . . . toil*] to get to the windward of a hunted animal was to prevent it from scenting its pursuers, and thus facilitate its being driven into a toil or snare.

339–340 *if my duty . . . unmannerly*] Probably the meaning of this vague complimentary phrase is: his orders from the king may compel him to be too obtrusive, and thus his real affection may be obscured by his bad manners.

348 *ventages*] holes in the barrel of the pipe, often called the stops.

GUIL. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

HAM. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me.

Re-enter POLONIUS

God bless you, sir!

POL. My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

HAM. Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

POL. By the mass, and 't is like a camel, indeed.

HAM. Methinks it is like a weasel.

POL. It is backed like a weasel. 370

HAM. Or like a whale?

POL. Very like a whale.

HAM. Then I will come to my mother by and by.

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362 *though you can fret . . . upon me*] Cf. *T. of Shrew*, II, i, 151: "*Frets*, call you these?" quoth she: "I'll fume with them." The quibble is on "fret" in the two senses of "annoy" and as a noun meaning the cross-bar of wood or wire over which the strings of a lute or guitar were stretched.

They fool me to the top of my bent. I will come by and by.

POL. I will say so. [*Exit Polonius.*

HAM. "By and by" is easily said. Leave me, friends.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

'T is now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day 381
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites;
How in my words soever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent! [*Exit.*

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374 *to the top of my bent*] to the fullest extent. Cf. II, ii, 30, *supra:* "in the full *bent*," and note.

377 "*By and by*"] At once.

378–379 *'T is now . . . yawn*] Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, V, i, 368–371.

381 *bitter . . . day*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read, less satisfactorily, *business as the bitter day.*

384 *The soul of Nero*] The emperor Nero murdered his mother Agrippina. Cf. *K. John*, V, ii, 152–153: "You bloody *Neroes*, ripping up the womb Of your dear mother England."

386 *speak daggers*] This is a favourite construction with Shakespeare. Cf. *Much Ado*, II, i, 220: "She *speaks poniards*, and every word *stabs*," and *K. John*, II, i, 462: "He *speaks* plain cannon fire."

388 *shent*] reproved, rebuked.

389 *To give them seals*] To give my words the full effect of sealed deeds, to put my cruel words into actual deeds.

SCENE III — A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN

KING. I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;
I your commission will forthwith dispatch,
And he to England shall along with you:
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.
GUIL. We will ourselves provide:
Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep those many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your majesty.
ROS. The single and peculiar life is bound
With all the strength and armour of the mind
To keep itself from noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests
The lives of many. The cease of majesty
Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw

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5 *terms of our estate*] conditions of our royal position.
6 *near us*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *dangerous*.
7 *lunacies*] Thus the Folios, which make the line an Alexandrine. Theobald substituted *lunes* (*i. e.*, fits of madness). The Quartos read *browes*, which has been explained to mean here "frowns" or "effronteries."
11 *The single and peculiar life*] The life of the private individual.
13 *noyance*] hurt, harm.
15 *The cease of majesty*] The decease of majesty, the dying king.
16 *gulf*] whirlpool.

What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

KING. Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage,
For we will fetters put about this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

ROS. }
GUIL. } We will haste us.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Enter POLONIUS

POL. My lord, he's going to his mother's closet:
Behind the arras I'll convey myself,
To hear the process; I'll warrant she'll tax him home:
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'T is meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege:
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

KING. Thanks, dear my lord.

[*Exit Polonius.*

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20 *mortised*] dovetailed; a term in carpentry.

24 *Arm you*] Prepare yourselves.

33 *of vantage*] from a point of vantage, from a good place for secret observation.

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up;
My fault is past. But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? "Forgive me my foul murder?"
That cannot be, since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.
May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world

47 *confront*] oppose so as to destroy.

48–50 *what's in prayer . . . being down*] We pray either to be prevented from falling into temptation or for pardon when we have sinned.

55 *mine own ambition*] the object of my ambition.

56 *retain the offence*] keep the profits of the crime.

57 *In the corrupted currents of this world*] In the courses which corruption ordinarily takes through the world. Thus the Quartos. For *currents* Folios read *currants*. '*Currents, i. e.*, occurrents, occurrences, has been suggested, as in V, ii, 349, *infra*. But such a change is unnecessary.

Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 't is seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: but 't is not so above;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
To give in evidence. What then? what rests?
Try what repentance can: what can it not?
Yet what can it when one can not repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul, that struggling to be free
Art more engaged! Help, angels! make assay!
Bow, stubborn knees, and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!
All may be well. [*Retires and kneels.*

Enter HAMLET

HAM. Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;
And now I'll do't: and so he goes to heaven:
And so am I revenged. That would be scann'd:
A villain kills my father; and for that,

---

58 *shove by*] drive out, expel.

61–62 *the action . . . nature*] the act stands for what it is; *the action lies* is a common legal phrase.

64 *give in*] supply.

68 *limed soul*] The soul is likened to a bird caught in a trap with birdlime.

69 *engaged*] entangled.

73 *it pat, now he is praying*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read, less forcibly, *it, but now a* (*i. e., he*) *is a praying.*

75 *That would be scann'd*] That requires consideration.

I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?
But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'T is heavy with him: and am I then revenged,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?
No.
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent:
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;
At game, a-swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in 't;
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black

79 *hire and salary*] The Quartos weakly read *base and silly.*

81 *broad blown . . . May*] in full bloom, with all the sap of May. Cf. I, v, 76, *supra:* "Cut off even in the *blossoms of my sin*"; and III, i, 159: "*blown* youth."

83 *in our circumstance . . . thought*] from detailed consideration and general tendency of our thought, as far as our mind can perceive.

88 *hent*] Thus all the early editions save the late Quarto of 1676, which reads *time*, and the Fourth Folio, which substitutes *bent.* The old verb "hent" in the sense of "clutch" or "grip" is common in Elizabethan literature. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, IV, iii, 119: "Merrily *hent* the stile-a." The substantive is rare and means either "clutch" (*i.e.*, grip) or "intention" (*i.e.*, purpose, that which is gripped by the mind). The latter is probably the meaning here.

As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays: 95
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. [*Exit.*

KING. [*Rising*] My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
Words without thoughts never to heaven go. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV — THE QUEEN'S CLOSET

Enter QUEEN *and* POLONIUS

POL. He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your grace hath screen'd and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll sconce me even here.
Pray you, be round with him.

HAM. [*Within*] Mother, mother, mother!

QUEEN. I'll warrant you; fear me not. Withdraw, I hear him coming. [*Polonius hides behind the arras.*

Enter HAMLET

HAM. Now, mother, what 's the matter?

QUEEN. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

---

96 *This physic*] The "purging" of the king's "soul" by prayer. Cf. line 85, *supra.*

4 *sconce*] Hanmer's correction of *silence*, the reading of the Second Quarto and of all later editions. The First Quarto has *I'll shroude my selfe.* For "sconce" cf. *M. Wives*, III, iii, 77–78: "I will *ensconce* me behind the arras." But *I'll silence me, i. e.*, I'll hold my tongue, may be right. It accords with the speaker's garrulous propensity.

5 *round*] direct, outspoken.

HAM. Mother, you have my father much offended.
QUEEN. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.
HAM. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.
QUEEN. Why, how now, Hamlet!
HAM. What's the matter now?
QUEEN. Have you forgot me?
HAM. No, by the rood, not so:
You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And — would it were not so! — you are my mother.
QUEEN. Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.
HAM. Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.
QUEEN. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me? Help, help, ho!
POL. [*Behind*] What, ho! help, help, help!
HAM. [*Drawing*] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead! [*Makes a pass through the arras.*
POL. [*Behind*] O, I am slain! [*Falls and dies.*
QUEEN. O me, what hast thou done?
HAM. Nay, I know not: is it the king?
QUEEN. O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!
HAM. A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.
QUEEN. As kill a king!

---

12 *a wicked*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *an idle.*
14 *by the rood*] by the crucifix.

HAM. Ay, lady, 't was my word.
[*Lifts up the arras and discovers Polonius.*
Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune;
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.
Leave wringing of your hands: peace! sit you down,
And let me wring your heart: for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff;
If damned custom have not brass'd it so,
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.
QUEEN. What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?
HAM. Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

38 *against sense*] against feeling.
42 *takes off the rose*] removes the grace, the beauty. Cf. III, i, 152, *supra*: "*the rose* of the fair state."
46 *contraction*] the marriage contract, matrimony.
49 *solidity*] solid earth.
50 *as against the doom*] as if in sight of the day of judgment.

QUEEN. Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?
HAM. Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?

52 *index*] prelude (of the indictment). An "index" commonly prefaced an Elizabethan book.

53 *Look here . . . and on this*] There is some difference of opinion as to whether Hamlet points to two portraits hung on the walls, or takes a miniature of his father from his pocket, or is merely drawing on his imagination. The last interpretation seems, in the view of the scanty scenic machinery of Shakespeare's stage, to be the most probable.

54 *counterfeit presentment*] portrait, mimic representation.

56 *Hyperion's curls*] See note on I, ii, 140, *supra*.
front] forehead. The statues of Jupiter gave him a very noble brow, indicating much intellectual power.

58 *station*] attitude or pose.

58–59 *Mercury . . . hill*] The god Mercury is very similarly described in Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 246–255, which was accessible in English translations.

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love, for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgement: and what judgement
Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have,
Else could you not have motion: but sure that sense
Is apoplex'd: for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserved some quantity of choice,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,

66 *leave to feed*] leave off feeding.

67 *batten*] gourmandise, feed like a glutton.
this moor] this low and uninviting pasture.

71–76 *Sense . . . difference*] This passage is omitted from the Folios. It is only found in the Second and later Quartos. In this passage "sense" is thrice used with a meaning indistinguishable from "reason." Taking the words generally Hamlet points out that his mother must have reason or brains, otherwise she could not have power of movement. But her reasoning faculty is paralysed, quite stifled, not merely perverted as in madness. When reason is dominated by insanity, it still retains some power of choice, which must have come into play, when the difference between the objects of choice differed so vastly.

77 *hoodman-blind*] blind man's buff.

81 *so mope*] show so much stupidity. Cf. *Tempest*, V, i, 239–240: "Even in a dream were we . . . brought *moping* hither."

If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
And reason pandars will.

QUEEN. O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.

HAM. Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty, —

QUEEN. O, speak to me no more;
These words like daggers enter in my ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet!

HAM. A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings;
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole
And put it in his pocket!

83 *mutine*] mutiny; only used here as a verb. But the word reappears as a noun, meaning mutineer, V, ii, 6, *infra*.

85 *her own fire*] the fire of flaming youth.

88 *reason pandars will*] reason becomes the pander, or disreputable agent, of lust. "Lust" is a common sense of "will."

90 *grained*] ingrained, fast dyed.

92 *enseamed*] defiled.

98 *a vice of kings*] a buffoon or clown of a king. In the old morality plays the "vice" was a clown or buffoon.

QUEEN. No more!
HAM. A king of shreds and patches —

Enter Ghost

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?
QUEEN. Alas, he's mad!
HAM. Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O, say!
GHOST. Do not forget: this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul:
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works:
Speak to her, Hamlet.
HAM. How is it with you, lady?
QUEEN. Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;

102 *shreds and patches*] an allusion to the motley or patchwork dress of the professional fool or clown.
104 *your gracious*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *you gracious*.
107 *lapsed . . . passion*] having let time slip by through indulgence in mere passion.
108 *important*] urgent, importunate.
114 *Conceit in weakest bodies*] Imagination in weakest creatures.
118 *incorporal*] ethereal, immaterial. "Corporal" for "corporeal" is not uncommon. But this form seems unknown elsewhere.

And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hairs, like life in excrements,
Start up and stand an end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?
HAM. On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable. Do not look upon me,
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects: then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears perchance for blood.
QUEEN. To whom do you speak this?
HAM. Do you see nothing there?
QUEEN. Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.
HAM. Nor did you nothing hear?
QUEEN. No, nothing but ourselves.
HAM. Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!
My father, in his habit as he lived!
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!
[*Exit Ghost.*
QUEEN. This is the very coinage of your brain:
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.
HAM. Ecstasy!

---

121 *Your . . . excrements*] Your hairs normally at rest (start up) as though the outgrowths of the body were endowed with life. "Excrements" is a generic term for hair, feathers, and nails.

127 *capable*] *sc.*, of feeling, susceptible. Cf. III, ii, 11, *supra.*

129 *My stern effects*] Probably the execution of my stern resolve. Thus all the early editions. The reading is harsh. For *effects* Singer suggested *affects*, *i. e.*, affections, temper, disposition.

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: it is not madness
That I have utter'd: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word, which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue,
For in the fatness of these pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

QUEEN. O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

147 *skin*] cover with a skin. Cf. *Meas. for Meas.*, II, ii, 136: "medicine . . . That *skins* the vice o' the top."

155 *curb*] The first Folio reads "courb." The word is usually interpreted as a derivative from the French "courber," to bend, curve. But neither "curb" nor "courb" is found in any sense except in the ordinary one of "restrain" elsewhere in Shakespeare, and very rarely in other English literature. A seventeenth-century reader in the copy of the First Folio now belonging to Mr. Marsden J. Perry, of Providence, R. I., substituted in manuscript the reading "couch," a word used by Shakespeare in the sense of "cringe" (cf. V, i, 216, *infra:* "*Couch* down awhile"). This emendation well harmonises with "woo," and deserves acceptance (cf. *Athenæum*, August 19, 1899). Hamlet's general meaning is that virtue has become the obsequious servitor of vice.

HAM. O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to my uncle's bed;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence; the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either . . . the devil, or throw him out

160 *Assume*] Acquire, with no sense of dissimulation.

161–165 *That monster . . . put on*] These lines appear only in the Quartos. They are omitted from the Folios. The Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Quartos after *eat* at line 161 omit the comma, which later Quartos insert. With that necessary punctuation the meaning must be: "That monster, custom, who destroys all natural sensibility; custom, that devil among human habits of conduct, is yet an angel in this regard, that when once the habit of fair and good actions is acquired, custom lends a cloak that is worn quite easily." In other words, bad habits, with their numbing or stupefying effects on the conscience, are most easily formed, but good habits are fostered no less readily.

167–170 *the next more . . . potency*] Thus the Quartos. The lines are omitted from the Folios.

168 *use*] habit.

169 *And either . . . the devil*] Thus the Second and Third Quartos, which leave the line manifestly incomplete. The Fourth Quarto reads *And maister the devil;* the later Quartos, *And master the devil.* Modern editors regularise the metre by reading *And either curb* (or *lay*, or *quell*) *the devil.* Any of these suggestions suit the context.

With wondrous potency. Once more, good night:
And when you are desirous to be blest,
I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,
[*Pointing to Polonius.*
I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.

QUEEN. What shall I do?

HAM. Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed;
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse;
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,

171–172 *And when . . . of you*] The desire of a blessing is a sign of contrition and grace, and Hamlet will ask a mother's blessing of the queen, when she gives this sign of repentance.

175 *their scourge*] heaven's scourge.

180 *One . . . lady*] Thus the Quartos. The words are omitted from the Folios.

182 *bloat*] bloated; probably dropsical through intemperance. This is Warburton's correction of the Quarto reading *blowt* and the Folio *blunt*.

183 *mouse*] a common term of endearment. Cf. *Tw. Night*, I, v, 58: "good my *mouse* of virtue."

184 *reechy*] filthy.

186 *ravel . . . out*] unravel, disclose.

But mad in craft. 'T were good you let him know;
For who, that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide? who would do so?
No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep
And break your own neck down.

QUEEN. Be thou assured, if words be made of breath
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

HAM. I must to England; you know that?

QUEEN. Alack,
I had forgot: 't is so concluded on.

---

190 *a paddock . . . a gib*] a toad . . . a gib-cat, a tom-cat.

194–196 *like the famous ape . . . neck down*] This fable is unidentified. It would seem to tell of an ape who, creeping into a basket of live birds, by way of imitative experiment, jumped out with a view to flying, and thus broke its neck. The revelation which Hamlet is bidding his mother make will cost her her pride, if not her life.

200 *I must to England*] It is not plain how Hamlet learnt the king's intention to send him to England. This the king first announced privately to Polonius, III, i, 169, *supra*, and then secretly communicated to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, III, iii, 4. But the present context (with Hamlet's "you know that?", and the queen's retort, "Alack, I had forgot") almost suggests that Hamlet had somehow contrived to acquire the information with the queen's connivance. Subsequently at IV, iii, 46, *infra*, when Hamlet is told that England is his destination, he pretends to have heard nothing of the design earlier. But that may be a part of his policy.

HAM. There's letters seal'd: and my two school-
fellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way,
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;
For 't is the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petar: and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon: O, 't is most sweet
When in one line two crafts directly meet.
This man shall set me packing:
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.
Mother, good night. Indeed this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.
Good night, mother.

[*Exeunt severally; Hamlet dragging in Polonius.*

202–210 *There's letters seal'd . . . directly meet*] Thus the Quartos. The lines are omitted from the Folios.

203 *adders fang'd*] adders with fangs.

206 *enginer*] the old form of engineer.

207 *Hoist . . . petar*] Hoisted with his own petard or mortar; petard was a piece of ordnance used in blowing open gates and doors.

211 *This man . . . packing*] This uncle of mine shall turn me into a plotter. "Packing" is used in a double sense, both of conspiring and of hurrying off.

ACT FOURTH — SCENE I

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN

KING

THERE'S MATTER IN these sighs, these profound heaves:
You must translate: 't is fit we understand them.
Where is your son?

QUEEN. Bestow this place on us a little while.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen to-night!

KING. What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

QUEEN. Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit,

ACT IV, SCENE I] The Quarto of 1676 first made Act IV to begin here, and that arrangement is generally followed. But this scene closely continues the action of the preceding one, and there is some ground for deferring the opening of a new act till Scene iv, *infra*.

Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries "A rat, a rat!"
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.
KING. O heavy deed!
It had been so with us, had we been there:
His liberty is full of threats to all,
To you yourself, to us, to every one.
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?
It will be laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrain'd and out of haunt,
This mad young man: but so much was our love,
We would not understand what was most fit,
But, like the owner of a foul disease,
To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?
QUEEN. To draw apart the body he hath kill'd:
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base,
Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.
KING. O Gertrude, come away!
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,
But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed
We must, with all our majesty and skill,
Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!

---

11 *brainish apprehension*] crazy notion.

18 *kept short . . . out of haunt*] kept within bounds . . . removed from company. For "kept short, restrain'd," cf. I, iii, 125, *supra*: "And with a larger *tether* may he walk."

26 *a mineral*] a metallic vein in a mine or a lode.

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him:
Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*
Come, Gertrude, we 'll call up our wisest friends;
And let them know, both what we mean to do,
And what's untimely done. . . .
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter
As level as the cannon to his blank
Transports his poison'd shot, may miss our name
And hit the woundless air. O, come away!
My soul is full of discord and dismay. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter HAMLET

HAM. Safely stowed.

ROS. } [*Within*] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!
GUIL. }

40–44 *And what 's untimely done. . . . woundless air*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios omit lines 41–44 (*whose whisper . . . woundless air*). Theobald inserted *Happily slander* after *untimely done*, which Capell changed to *So haply slander*, words which are usually adopted to fill the obvious hiatus, and make satisfactory grammar and sense.

41 *diameter*] probably used for "circumference."

42 *blank*] bull's-eye; the white mark in the centre of a target.

HAM. But soft, what noise? who calls on Hamlet?
O, here they come.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN

ROS. What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAM. Compounded it with dust, whereto 't is kin.

ROS. Tell us where 't is, that we may take it thence
And bear it to the chapel.

HAM. Do not believe it.

ROS. Believe what?

HAM. That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge! what replication should be made by the son of a king?

ROS. Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAM. Ay, sir; that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the king best service in the end: he keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to be last swallowed: when he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

ROS. I understand you not, my lord.

HAM. I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

---

6 *Compounded*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Compound*, in the imperative, which suits the context better. For Hamlet has not buried Polonius' body.

15 *countenance*] favour.

16 *authorities*] offices of authority.

17 *like an ape*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *like an apple*, which may safely be rejected.

Ros. My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.

Ham. The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing —

Guil. A thing, my lord?

Ham. Of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III — ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter King, *attended*

King. I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgement, but their eyes;
And where 't is so, the offender's scourge is weigh'd,
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause: diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.

26–27 *The body . . . is a thing*] Hamlet is intentionally talking nonsense. But he may be contrasting confusedly the fleshy form of the king his uncle with the disembodied spirit of the king his father.

29–30 *Hide fox, and all after*] Probably a cry of children playing hide and seek.

4 *distracted*] easily distracted, inconstant.

6–7 *the offender's . . . offence*] the populace scrutinises the punishment, but overlooks the crime.

9 *Deliberate pause*] The outcome of careful deliberation.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ

How now! what hath befall'n?

ROS. Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

KING. But where is he?

ROS. Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

KING. Bring him before us.

ROS. Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

Enter HAMLET *and* GUILDENSTERN

KING. Now, Hamlet, where 's Polonius?

HAM. At supper.

KING. At supper! where? 19

HAM. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table: that 's the end.

KING. Alas, alas!

HAM. A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING. What dost thou mean by this?

21–22 *a certain convocation . . . diet*] Some commentators doubtfully detect in the words "worms," "emperor," and "diet," an allusion to the diets (*i. e.*, parliaments) of the Holy Roman Empire, which were frequently held in the city of Worms. The most famous of these imperial diets was that of 1521, when Luther appeared before the Emperor Charles V, and Protestantism was condemned.

26–28 *Alas, alas! . . . that worm*] Thus the Quartos. These words are omitted from the Folios.

HAM. Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar. 31

KING. Where is Polonius?

HAM. In heaven; send thither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

KING. Go seek him there. [*To some Attendants.*

HAM. He will stay till you come. [*Exeunt Attendants.*

KING. Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety, 40
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done, must send thee hence
With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready and the wind at help,
The associates tend, and every thing is bent
For England.

HAM. For England?

KING. Ay, Hamlet.

HAM. Good.

KING. So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

HAM. I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for England! Farewell, dear mother.

---

31 *a progress*] the state-journey of a king.

41 *tender*] regard with tenderness.
dearly] bitterly.

44 *at help*] serviceable, favourable. For this use of the preposition, cf. *Wint. Tale*, V, i, 140: "*at* friend" *i. e.*, friendly.

45 *The associates tend*] Your companions wait. Cf. I, iii, 83, *supra*: "Your servants *tend*."

46 *For England?*] See note on III, iv, 200, *supra*.

48 *I see a cherub . . . them*] I think they are known in heaven. A cherub or angel is naturally credited with a wide range of vision.

KING. Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAM. My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh, and so, my mother. Come, for England! [*Exit.*

KING. Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;
Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night:
Away! for every thing is seal'd and done
That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*
And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught —
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us — thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters congruing to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 't is done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun. [*Exit.*

61 *thy free awe*] thy willing reverence, the feeling of respect voluntarily or spontaneously entertained by thee.

62–63 *coldly set Our sovereign process*] treat with indifference our royal mandate.

64 *congruing*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read, less satisfactorily, *coniuring*.

66 *hectic*] fever; rarely used as a noun.

68 *Howe'er my haps*] whatever my fortunes.

SCENE IV — A PLAIN IN DENMARK

Enter FORTINBRAS, *a* Captain *and* Soldiers, *marching*

FOR. Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king;
Tell him that by his license Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promised march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.
If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye;
And let him know so.
CAP. I will do 't, my lord.
FOR. Go softly on.

[*Exeunt Fortinbras and Soldiers.*

Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and others*

HAM. Good sir, whose powers are these?
CAP. They are of Norway, sir.
HAM. How purposed, sir, I pray you?
CAP. Against some part of Poland.
HAM. Who commands them, sir?
CAP. The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

SCENE IV] Here according to some editors Act IV should rightly begin. See note at Act IV, Sc. i, *supra*.

3 *Craves*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *Claims*, which agrees better with the context.

6 *in his eye*] in his presence.

8 *softly*] gently, leisurely.

9–66 *Good sir . . . worth!*] Thus the Quartos. The whole passage is omitted from the Folios.

HAM. Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,
Or for some frontier?
CAP. Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.
HAM. Why, then the Polack never will defend it.
CAP. Yes, it is already garrison'd.
HAM. Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate the question of this straw:
This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.
CAP. God be wi' you, sir. [*Exit.*
ROS. Will 't please you go, my lord?
HAM. I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.
[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*
How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,

---

15 *the main*] the mainland, the country at large.
20 *To pay five ducats . . . farm it*] I would not pay five ducats for the right of collecting the taxes from it.
22 *A ranker rate*] A richer revenue.
27 *imposthume*] an inward swelling or abscess.
34 *market of his time*] the business which occupies his time.
36 *discourse*] reasoning faculty. Cf. I, ii, 150, *supra*: "*discourse* of reason."

Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event, —
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward, — I do not know
Why yet I live to say "this thing's to do,"
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means,
To do 't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
Witness this army, of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour 's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,

39 *fust*] grow mouldy, musty.

46 *gross as earth*] large and obvious as the earth.

47 *charge*] expense.

50 *Makes mouths*] Laughs, grimaces.

55 *But greatly*] But it is an attribute of greatness.

58 *Excitements . . . blood*] Provocatives, incitements of my reason and my passion, of my mind and heart. Cf. III, ii, 67, *supra:* "blood and judgement."

That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! [*Exit.*

SCENE V — ELSINORE

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter QUEEN, HORATIO, *and a* Gentleman

QUEEN. I will not speak with her.

GENT. She is importunate, indeed distract:
Her mood will needs be pitied.

QUEEN. What would she have?

GENT. She speaks much of her father, says she hears
There's tricks i' the world, and hems and beats her heart,
Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;
Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,

61 *trick of fame*] capricious or whimsical point of honour or reputation.
64 *continent*] receptacle.
Sc. V (stage direction), *a Gentleman*] The Quartos alone introduce this character here. The Folios give his speeches to Horatio.
6 *Spurns enviously*] Kicks spitefully.
8 *the unshaped use of it*] its incoherence.
9 *to collection*] to the drawing of inferences.

Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

HOR. 'T were good she were spoken with, for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

QUEEN. Let her come in. [*Exit Gentleman.*

[*Aside*] To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

Re-enter Gentleman, *with* OPHELIA

OPH. Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN. How now, Ophelia!

OPH. [*Sings*] How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon.

---

13 *unhappily*] mischievously.

18 *toy*] trifle.

amiss] disaster. The substantive "amiss" Shakespeare twice uses in the *Sonnets* in the sense of "sin" or "wrong." Cf. xxxv, 7; cli, 3.

19 *artless jealousy*] crude suspicion.

21 (stage direction) *Re-enter . . .* OPHELIA] The First Quarto has "Enter Ofelia, playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing."

23–26 *How should I . . . sandal shoon*] An old popular song not by Shakespeare, which is continued by Ophelia in lines 29–32, 34–38. The traditional music is given in Chappell's *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, Vol. I, p. 236. The words are printed in Percy's *Reliques*.

25–26 *his cockle hat . . . sandal shoon*] the conventional dress of a pilgrim, who ordinarily wore a cockle-shell in his hat.

QUEEN. Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?
OPH. Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

[*Sings*] He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

Oh, oh!

QUEEN. Nay, but, Ophelia, —
OPH. Pray you, mark.

[*Sings*] White his shroud as the mountain snow, —

Enter KING

QUEEN. Alas, look here, my lord.

OPH. [*Sings*] Larded with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

KING. How do you, pretty lady?
OPH. Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!
KING. Conceit upon her father.

---

36 *Larded*] Garnished, ornamented. Cf. V, ii, 20, *infra*.
37 *did go*] Pope's correction of the old misreading *did not go*.
40–41 *They say . . . daughter*] An apparent reference to the popular medieval story that Christ went into a baker's shop for some bread, and that the baker's daughter refused it, with the result that she was transformed into an owl.
43 *Conceit upon*] Thought of.

OPH. Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

[*Sings*] To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,
And dupp'd the chamber-door;
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.

KING. Pretty Ophelia!

OPH. Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on 't:

[*Sings*] By Gis and by Saint Charity,
Alack, and fie for shame!
Young men will do't, if they come to't;
By cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.

He answers:

So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,
An thou hadst not come to my bed.

46–64 *To-morrow . . . to my bed*] Another old song with a traditional tune. See Chappell's *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, Vol. I, p. 227. St. Valentine's day, 14 February, was from time immemorial devoted to the exchange of professions of love; "your Valentine" (line 49) means "your sweetheart."

51 *dupp'd*] opened.

56 *By Gis*] Probably "by Jesus," with some confused reference to the initial letters I H S.

59 *By cock*] By God; a common perversion.

KING. How long hath she been thus?

OPH. I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the cold ground. My brother shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night. [*Exit.* 71

KING. Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you. [*Exit Horatio.*

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions! First, her father slain:
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove: the people muddied,
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,
In hugger-mugger to inter him: poor Ophelia 81
Divided from herself and her fair judgement,
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts:
Last, and as much containing as all these,

69–70 *Come, my coach*] Much indelicate play is made of this apparently innocent expression of Ophelia in Chapman, Jonson, and Marston's *Eastward Hoe*, 1605, by the heroine Gertrude, in dialogue with Hamlet a footman in her father's service (Act III, Sc. ii, *passim*). That scene is an obvious skit on Shakespeare's treatment of Ophelia's madness. See also note on lines 191–195, *infra*.

75–76 *When sorrows come . . . battalions*] Cf. *Pericles*, I, iv, 63–64: "*One sorrow never comes but brings an heir*, That may succeed as his inheritor."

78 *muddied*] stirred like a turbid pool.

81 *hugger-mugger*] in secret haste.

Her brother is in secret come from France,
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death;
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering-piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death. [*A noise within.*

QUEEN. Alack, what noise is this?

KING. Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door.

Enter another Gentleman

What is the matter?

GENT. Save yourself, my lord:
The ocean, overpeering of his list,
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord;
And, as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,

86 *Feeds . . . clouds*] Is bewildered by the mystery of his father's death, conceals his intention. For *Feeds on his wonder* the Quartos read *Feed on this wonder*, and the Folios *Keeps on his wonder*.

91 *In ear and ear*] In his two ears.

92 *a murdering-piece*] a small cannon loaded with case shot, and capable of a raking fire.

94 *Switzers*] the royal guards, commonly formed of Swiss mercenaries.

96 *overpeering of his list*] overflowing its boundary.

98 *in a riotous head*] leading a riotous armed force or insurrection.

The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry "Choose we; Laertes shall be king!"
Caps, hands and tongues applaud it to the clouds,
"Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!"

QUEEN. How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs! [*Noise within.*

KING. The doors are broke.

Enter LAERTES, *armed;* Danes *following*

LAER. Where is this king? Sirs, stand you all without.

DANES. No, let 's come in.

LAER. I pray you, give me leave.

DANES. We will, we will. [*They retire without the door.*

LAER. I thank you: keep the door. O thou vile king,
Give me my father!

QUEEN. Calmly, good Laertes.

LAER. That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard;
Cries cuckold to my father; brands the harlot
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brows
Of my true mother.

KING. What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,

---

102 *The ratifiers and props*] These words are in apposition to "antiquity" and "custom." Words solely derive their warrant and support — all their significance — from "antiquity" and "custom."

107 *this is counter*] this is false scent; a familiar phrase in hunting.

Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed: let him go, Gertrude:
Speak, man.

LAER. Where is my father?

KING. Dead.

QUEEN. But not by him.

KING. Let him demand his fill.

LAER. How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation: to this point I stand,
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged
Most throughly for my father.

KING. Who shall stay you?

LAER. My will, not all the world:
And for my means, I'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.

KING. Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is 't writ in your revenge
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?

LAER. None but his enemies.

KING. Will you know them then?

---

131 *both the worlds*] this world and the next. Cf. *Macb.*, III, ii, 16: "*both the worlds* (*i. e.*, heaven and earth) suffer."

133 *throughly*] thoroughly.

139 *swoopstake*] sweepstake, *i. e.*, a gambler who sweeps in all the stakes. The First Quarto reads *Swoop-stake-like.* All other early editions read substantially *That soopstake.*

LAER. To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms;
And, like the kind life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood.
KING. Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensibly in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgement pierce
As day does to your eye.
DANES. [*Within*] Let her come in.
LAER. How now! what noise is that? 150

Re-enter OPHELIA

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven times salt,
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid with weight,
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!
O heavens! is 't possible a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?
Nature is fine in love, and where 't is fine

143 *the kind life-rendering pelican*] the pelican is supposed to pierce her breast in order to feed her young with her blood. For *pelican* the First Folio has the curious misprint *Politician.*

148 *pierce*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *peare.* "As level . . . pierce" means "penetrate as straight."

149 DANES [*Within*] *Let her come in*] Capell's correction of the confused Folio reading "*A noise within. Let her come in.*" The Quartos assign "Let her come in" to Laertes.

158–160 *Nature . . . loves*] Thus the Folios. The lines are omitted from the Quartos. The passage means that, in conformity with the

It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

OPH. [*Sings*] They bore him barefaced on the bier;
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny:
And in his grave rain'd many a tear, —

Fare you well, my dove!

LAER. Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
It could not move thus.

OPH. [*Sings*] You must sing down a-down,
An you call him a-down-a.

O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.

LAER. This nothing's more than matter.

OPH. There's rosemary, that's for remembrance:

strict or punctilious working of Nature in matters of perfect love, Ophelia has sacrificed her sanity to her affection for her dead father.

159 *instance*] specimen.

161–168 *They bore him . . . a-down-a*] No external source for these lines has been found. They may be Shakespeare's invention, though the refrains "Hey nonny" and "Down a-down" are familiar elsewhere. Line 162, *Hey . . . nonny:* is only found in the Folios.

169 *wheel*] The word is often said without much proof to have been in use for "refrain" or "burden," like the Latin word "rota." Probably the spinning-wheel is meant, and reference made to the spinning song.

169–70 *the false steward . . . daughter*] This may be the theme of the ballad, but the allusion is not clear. There is possibly a vague hit at King Claudius's capture of Hamlet's mother, the wife of his late king and master.

172 *rosemary . . . remembrance*] rosemary, an emblem of remembrance, was carried at both weddings and funerals. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, IV, iv, 74, 76: "*rosemary and rue . . Grace and remembrance.*"

pray you, love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for thoughts.

LAER. A document in madness; thoughts and remembrance fitted.

OPH. There's fennel for you, and columbines: there's rue for you; and here 's some for me: we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays: O, you must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy: I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died: they say a' made a good end, — 182

[*Sings*] For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

LAER. Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

173–174 *pansies . . . thoughts*] this flower named from the French *pensées* was commonly held to symbolise lovers' thoughts.

175 *A document in madness*] A lesson, *i. e.*, instructive example, in madness.

177 *fennel . . . columbines*] the floral emblems respectively of flattery and ingratitude.

178–179 *rue . . . o' Sundays*] The herb "rue," an emblem of repentance or grief, was popularly called "herb of grace," and might well bear so religious a name on Sundays. Cf. *Rich. II*, III, iv, 105–106: "a bank of *rue*, sour *herb of grace:* Rue, even for ruth."

180 *with a difference*] in heraldry slight variations in coats of arms to fit them for different members of the same family were technically called "differences." The queen and Ophelia have different reasons for wearing their "rue."

daisy] the emblem of deceit.

181 *violets*] the emblem of fidelity.

183 *For bonny . . . joy*] a line from an old ballad now lost. The tune survives in Elizabethan music-books. Cf. Queen Elizabeth's Virginal-book, and Ballet's Lute-book at Trinity College, Dublin.

184 *Thought . . . passion*] Grief . . . suffering.

185 *She turns to favour*] She transmutes into things of agreeable charm.

OPH. [*Sings*] And will a' not come again?
And will a' not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll:
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan:
God ha' mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi' you. [*Exit.*

LAER. Do you see this, O God?

KING. Laertes, I must commune with your grief,
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me:
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,

186–195 *And will a' not . . . on his soul*] This is an old song, of which the tune survives in seventeenth-century music-books.

191–195 *His beard was as white . . . soul*] This verse is parodied in *Eastward Hoe*, 1605, by Chapman, Jonson, and Marston, III, ii, 96–100. The parody, which begins "His head as white as mylke," is sung by Gertrude, a somewhat lascivious young lady, in the presence, among others, of Hamlet, a footman. See lines 69–70, "Come, my coach!" and note.

196 *of all*] on all.

198 *commune*] The accent is on the first syllable. The word was pronounced much like *common*, which is the reading of the First Folio.

203 *touch'd*] sullied, implicated in guilt.

To you in satisfaction; but if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.
LAER. Let this be so;
His means of death, his obscure funeral,
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite nor formal ostentation,
Cry to be heard, as 't were from heaven to earth,
That I must call't in question.
KING. So you shall;
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you, go with me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI — ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter HORATIO *and a* Servant

HOR. What are they that would speak with me?
SERV. Sea-faring men, sir: they say they have letters for you.
HOR. Let them come in. [*Exit Servant.*
I do not know from what part of the world
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

Enter Sailors

FIRST SAIL. God bless you, sir.
HOR. Let him bless thee too.

211 *ostentation*] funeral pomp.

FIRST SAIL. He shall, sir, an't please him. There's a letter for you, sir; it comes from the ambassador that was bound for England; if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

HOR. [*Reads*] "Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the king: they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them: on the instant they got clear of our ship; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldest fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell.

"He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET."

Come, I will make you way for these your letters;
And do't the speedier, that you may direct me
To him from whom you brought them. [*Exeunt.*

---

11 *let to know*] informed.

13 *means*] means of access.

14–15 *appointment*] equipment.

18–19 *they knew what they did*] In all probability this means that the pirates knew Hamlet's rank, and deemed it politic to treat him gently.

22 *the bore*] the calibre of the gun, the capacity of the barrel. The general meaning of the phrase here is "words cannot do full justice to the importance of the matter."

SCENE VII — ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter KING *and* LAERTES

KING. Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend,
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life.

LAER. It well appears: but tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirr'd up.

KING. O, for two special reasons,
Which may to you perhaps seem much unsinew'd,
But yet to me they're strong. The queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself —
My virtue or my plague, be it either which —
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him;

7 *crimeful*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read, less forcibly, *criminall*.
9 *mainly were stirr'd up*] were powerfully incited to do.
14 *conjunctive*] essentially bound. The "conjunction" of planets was in the speaker's mind, as is shown by his mention of the motion of the star in the next line.
17 *public count*] public account, examination, inquiry.
18 *general gender*] common people.

Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,
Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again
And not where I had aim'd them.

LAER. And so have I a noble father lost;
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections: but my revenge will come.

KING. Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull
That we can let our beard be shook with danger
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more:
I loved your father, and we love ourself;
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine —

---

20 *like the spring . . . stone*] There was a spring or well at King's Newnham, in Warwickshire, Shakespeare's county, as well as at Knaresborough, which had this petrifying capacity.

21 *Convert his gyves to graces*] The king means that to imprison Hamlet would be to increase his popularity. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, II, ii, 212: "And made their bends adornings."

22 *loud a wind*] boisterous a wind. Thus the Folios; the early Quartos misprint *loued Arm'd.*

27 *if praises . . . again*] if my praises may go back to Ophelia's past days.

28 *Stood challenger . . . age*] Stood, in virtue of her perfect qualities, on the very pinnacle of contemporary merit, challenging all comers.

Enter a Messenger, *with letters*

How now! what news?

MESS. Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:
This to your majesty; this to the queen.

KING. From Hamlet! who brought them?

MESS. Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not:
They were given me by Claudio; he received them
Of him that brought them.

KING. Laertes, you shall hear them.
Leave us. [*Exit Messenger.*

[*Reads*] "High and mighty, You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return.

"HAMLET."

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

LAER. Know you the hand?

KING. 'T is Hamlet's character. "Naked"!
And in a postscript here, he says "alone."
Can you advise me?

LAER. I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
"Thus didest thou."

KING. If it be so, Laertes, —

43 *naked*] destitute.
49 *abuse*] deception.
51 *character*] handwriting.

As how should it be so? how otherwise? —
Will you be ruled by me?
LAER. Ay, my lord;
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.
KING. To thine own peace. If he be now return'd,
As checking at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it, I will work him
To an exploit now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but fall:
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe;
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice,
And call it accident.
LAER. My lord, I will be ruled;
The rather, if you could devise it so
That I might be the organ.
KING. It falls right.
You have been talk'd of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him,

---

58 *how should it be so?*] We should expect "how should it not be so?" The words mean "how can there be any question but that it will be so?" The arrangement of this and the following lines is somewhat confused in both Quartos and Folios.

62 *checking at*] forsaking; a hawking term for the abandonment by the hawk of its quarry.

67 *shall uncharge the practice*] shall bring no charge against the stratagem or trick, shall fail to detect the treachery.

68–81 *My lord . . . graveness*] These lines appear only in the Quartos. They are omitted from the Folios.

69 *organ*] instrument.

As did that one, and that in my regard
Of the unworthiest siege.

LAER. What part is that, my lord?

KING. A very riband in the cap of youth,
Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes
The light and careless livery that it wears
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
Importing health and graveness. Two months since,
Here was a gentleman of Normandy: —
I've seen myself, and served against, the French,
And they can well on horseback: but this gallant
Had witchcraft in't; he grew unto his seat,
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse
As had he been incorpsed and demi-natured
With the brave beast: so far he topp'd my thought
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,
Come short of what he did.

LAER. A Norman was't?

KING. A Norman.

LAER. Upon my life, Lamond.

75–76 *that in my regard . . . siege*] that accomplishment which (of all your accomplishments) is in my view of the poorest rank. For "siege" cf. *Othello*, I, ii, 22: "men of royal *siege*."

80 *sables*] Cf. III, ii, 125, *supra*, and note.

81 *Importing . . . graveness*] Denoting health (in the case of sportive youth) and gravity (in the case of sober age).

84 *can well*] have expert ability. Thus the Quartos. The Folios absurdly read *ran well*.

87 *incorpsed and demi-natured*] incorporated into and half-amalgamated.

88 *topp'd*] surpassed.

89 *in forgery of shapes*] in my imagination or conception of his feats.

92 *Lamond*] Thus Pope. The Quartos read *Lamord*.

KING. The very same.
LAER. I know him well: he is the brooch indeed
And gem of all the nation.
KING. He made confession of you,
And gave you such a masterly report,
For art and exercise in your defence,
And for your rapier most especial,
That he cried out, 't would be a sight indeed
If one could match you: the scrimers of their nation,
He swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye,
If you opposed them. Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy
That he could nothing do but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.
Now, out of this —
LAER. What out of this, my lord?
KING. Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?
LAER. Why ask you this?
KING. Not that I think you did not love your father,
But that I know love is begun by time,

---

93 *the brooch*] the conspicuous ornament.
95 *He made confession of you*] He made acknowledgment of your prowess.
97 *defence*] art of fencing. Cf. *As you like it*, III, iii, 54: "*defence* is better than no skill."
100 *scrimers*] fencers. Shakespeare's adaptation of the French word "escrimeur."
101 *motion*] pose, gesture in making the attack; a technical term in fencing. So again in line 157, *infra*.
103 *envenom with his envy*] embitter with his envy of you.

And that I see, in passages of proof,
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.
There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;
And nothing is at a like goodness still,
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,
Dies in his own too much: that we would do
We should do when we would; for this "would" changes
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents,
And then this "should" is like a spendthrift sigh,
That hurts by easing. But, to the quick o' the ulcer:
Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake,
To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words?

LAER. To cut his throat i' the church.

KING. No place indeed should murder sanctuarize;
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.
Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:

112 *in passages of proof*] by instances drawn from experience.

116 *still*] always, continuously.

117 *plurisy*] plethora, excess; from the Latin "plus." The word is in no way connected with "pleurisy."

118 *too much*] used as a substantive meaning "excess." Cf. *All 's Well*, III, ii, 88.

122 *a spendthrift sigh*] a sigh was thought to consume or waste the heart's blood. Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, III, ii, 97: "sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear."

127 *sanctuarize*] make a sanctuary, protect from arrest; a sanctuary being a place where fugitives from justice were immune from arrest.

We 'll put on those shall praise your excellence
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you; bring you in fine together
And wager on your heads: he, being remiss,
Most generous and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils, so that with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice
Requite him for your father.

LAER. I will do't;
And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank,
So mortal that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratch'd withal: I 'll touch my point
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

KING. Let's further think of this;
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape: if this should fail,
And that our drift look through our bad performance,
'T were better not assay'd: therefore this project
Should have a back or second, that might hold

131 *put on*] put up, instigate.
138 *unbated*] unblunted, without the protecting button.
a pass of practice] a treacherous thrust. For "practice," cf. line 67.
141 *a mountebank*] a quack doctor, an itinerant vendor of drugs.
148 *cataplasm*] poultice.
150 *fit us to our shape*] fit us to act our part.

If this did blast in proof. Soft! let me see:
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings:
I ha't:
When in your motion you are hot and dry —
As make your bouts more violent to that end —
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce; whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there. But stay, what noise?

Enter QUEEN

How now, sweet queen!

QUEEN. One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow: your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

LAER. Drown'd! O, where?

QUEEN. There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,

154 *If this did blast in proof*] If this should burst or break down on trial.

155 *cunnings*] skill. Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *commings* or *comings*, *i. e.*, fencing bouts, a reading which is quite defensible.

157 *in your motion*] in your attack; a technical term in fencing. Cf. line 101, *supra*.

160 *for the nonce*] for the occasion.

161 *stuck*] rapier; from the French "estoc." It is also found as an abbreviation of the Anglicised Italian "stoccata," a thrust in fencing.

168 *hoar leaves*] The leaves of the willow are silvery grey on the under side. Cf. Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 13: "*glauca Canentia fronde* Salicta."

170 *crow-flowers*] apparently gilly-flowers, but sometimes interpreted as buttercups.
long purples] the purple "orchis mascula."

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

LAER. Alas, then she is drown'd!

QUEEN. Drown'd, drown'd.

LAER. Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet
It is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will: when these are gone,
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord:

171 *liberal*] licentious.

174 *sliver*] slip, split branch.

178 *tunes*] Thus the First Quarto and the Folios. The other Quartos read *laudes, i. e.*, psalms.

179 *incapable*] insensible.

180 *native and indued*] congenital and inured. Cf. I, ii, 47, *supra:* "more *native* to the heart."

188 *our trick*] our habit.

189–190 *when these are gone . . . out*] When these tears are shed, I shall have overcome my womanish weakness. Cf. *Hen. V*, IV, vi, 31: "all my mother came into my eyes."

I have a speech of fire that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it. [*Exit.*

KING. Let's follow, Gertrude:
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again;
Therefore let's follow. [*Exeunt.*

192 *douts*] extinguishes. Knight's emendation of the First Folio reading *doubts*. The Quartos and later Folios have *drowns*.

ACT FIFTH — SCENE I

A CHURCHYARD

Enter two Clowns, *with spades, &c.*

FIRST CLOWN

IS SHE TO BE BURIED in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

SEC. CLO. I tell thee she is; and therefore make her grave straight: the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

FIRST CLO. How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

SEC. CLO. Why, 't is found so.

FIRST CLO. It must be "se offendendo;" it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly,

2 *salvation*] blunder for "damnation" or "destruction."

4 *straight*] immediately, without delay.

crowner] coroner.

it argues an act: and an act hath three branches; it is, to act, to do, and to perform: argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

SEC. CLO. Nay, but hear you, goodman delver.

FIRST CLO. Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: if the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes; mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

SEC. CLO. But is this law?

FIRST CLO. Ay, marry, is 't; crowner's quest law.

SEC. CLO. Will you ha' the truth on 't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

FIRST CLO. Why, there thou say'st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even

---

9 *se offendendo*] blunder for "se defendendo," the jury's finding in justifiable homicide.

12 *argal*] a colloquial perversion of "ergo," therefore.

22 *crowner's quest law*] the law governing coroner's inquests. The legal quibbling here has been held to parody a famous old case (Hales *v.* Petite, of 1561), fully reported in Plowden's contemporary Law Latin Reports, which investigated the conditions of the suicide, by drowning, of Sir James Hales, in which the act was subtly divided into three parts, and it was argued that "as Sir James Hales, being alive, caused Sir James Hales to die, therefore the act of the living man was the death of the dead man, for which the living man must be punished." The legal argument throughout is a "reductio ad absurdum."

26 *there thou say'st*] now you speak to the purpose.

28–29 *even Christian*] ordinary fellow Christian.

Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession.

SEC. CLO. Was he a gentleman?

FIRST CLO. A' was the first that ever bore arms.

SEC. CLO. Why, he had none.

FIRST CLO. What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digged: could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee: if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself —

SEC. CLO. Go to.

FIRST CLO. What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

SEC. CLO. The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

FIRST CLO. I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well; but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now, thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To 't again, come.

SEC. CLO. "Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?"

FIRST CLO. Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

SEC. CLO. Marry, now I can tell.

FIRST CLO. To 't.

SEC. CLO. Mass, I cannot tell.

---

39 *confess thyself*] The first part of a vulgar catch phrase: "confess thyself and be hanged." Cf. *Othello*, IV, i, 38, 39: "*confess and be hanged* for his labour."

52 *unyoke*] unharness, finish your day's work.

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO, *afar off*

FIRST CLO. Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating, and when you are asked this question next, say "a grave-maker:" the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of liquor. 60

[*Exit Sec. Clown.*

[*He digs, and sings.*

In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, O, the time, for-a my behove,
O, methought, there-a was nothing-a meet.

HAM. Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

HOR. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

---

60 *to Yaughan; fetch*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *in, and fetch.* There is no satisfactory explanation of the word "Yaughan"; that there was a well-known tavern keeper of the name is unsupported, but may be true. It is just possible that "get thee to Yaughan" is a careless transcript by the ear of "get thee gone."

stoup] drinking cup, flagon. Cf. V, ii, 254, *infra:* "*stoups* of wine."

61–64 *In youth . . . meet*] This stanza and the two which follow, lines 71–74, 91–94, and 116–7, all come with some textual variations from the poem headed "The aged lover renounceth love," by Thomas, Lord Vaux, Henry VIII's courtier. Vaux's poem was first printed in the publisher Tottel's popular poetical miscellany, 1557, called "*Songs and Sonettes*, written by the . . . late Earle of Surrey and other."

67–68 *a property of easiness*] a matter of easy familiarity.

HAM. 'T is e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

FIRST CLO. [*Sings*] But age, with his stealing steps,
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me intil the land,
As if I had never been such.
[*Throws up a skull.*

HAM. That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'er-reaches; one that would circumvent God, might it not?

HOR. It might, my lord.

HAM. Or of a courtier, which could say "Good morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, sweet lord?" This might be my lord such-a-one, that praised my lord such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it; might it not?

HOR. Ay, my lord.

HAM. Why, e'en so: and now my Lady Worm's;

71–74 *But age . . . been such*] See note on ll. 61–64, *supra*.

74 *such*] *i. e.*, a lover.

76 *jowls*] knocks or dashes.

77 *Cain's jaw-bone*] the jawbone, with which Cain was traditionally said to have slain Abel.

78 *a politician*] a crafty wirepuller. Shakespeare always uses the word in a bad sense.

o'er-reaches] gets the better of. Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *o're-offices*, *i. e.*, domineers over as a superior officer.

82–84 *This might be . . . not?*] Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, I, ii, 208–210: "And now I remember, my lord, you gave good words the other day of a bay courser I rode on; it is yours, because you liked it."

chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade: here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see 't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with 'em? mine ache to think on 't. 90

FIRST CLO. [*Sings*] A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding sheet:
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.
[*Throws up another skull.*

HAM. There's another: why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries: is

87 *mazzard*] skull.

90 *loggats*] a game something like bowls, in which small logs or cones of apple-wood are aimed from a distance at a wooden jack.

91–94 *A pick-axe . . . is meet*] See note on ll. 61–64, *supra*.

96 *quiddities*] subtle niceties.

97 *quillets*] quibbles.

99 *sconce*] head.

101–102 *his statutes . . . recoveries*] These are technical legal terms; "statutes" and "recognizances" were different forms of legal bonds, which are often found mentioned together in the covenants of a deed of purchase; "fines" and "recoveries" were legal processes for rendering ownership incontestable. (Cf. *Com. of Errors*, II, ii, 73.) "Double vouchers" means suretyship of exceptional validity in which two persons instead of one pledged their bond.

this the fine of his fines and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

HOR. Not a jot more, my lord.

HAM. Is not parchment made of sheep-skins? 110

HOR. Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

HAM. They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave's this, sirrah?

FIRST CLO. Mine, sir.

[*Sings*] O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

HAM. I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in 't.

FIRST CLO. You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore 't is not yours: for my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine. 120

103 *the fine of his fines*] the end or ultimate issue of his fines. Cf. *All 's Well*, IV, iv, 35: "the *fine 's* the crown."

104 *fine pate . . . fine dirt*] "fine" which has just been used as a noun in the two senses of "end" and "legal process," now appears as an adjective in the sense first of "splendid," and then of "small" or "finely powdered."

106 *a pair of indentures*] a deed in duplicate; two copies of a deed, both written on the same sheet of paper or parchment, with the two instruments separated from one another by an indented line.

107 *conveyances*] legal deeds of conveyance.

108 *the inheritor*] the owner, the possessor.

113 *assurance*] a further legal quibbling, "assurance" being often used for a deed of conveyance, engrossed on parchment.

116–7 *O, a pit . . . is meet*] See note on ll. 61–64, *supra*.

HAM. Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't and say it is thine: 't is for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

FIRST CLO. 'T is a quick lie, sir; 't will away again, from me to you.

HAM. What man dost thou dig it for?

FIRST CLO. For no man, sir.

HAM. What woman then?

FIRST CLO. For none, neither.

HAM. Who is to be buried in 't? 130

FIRST CLO. One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

HAM. How absolute the knave is! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe. How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

FIRST CLO. Of all the days i' the year, I came to 't that day that our last king Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras. 140

122 *the quick*] the living.

133 *absolute*] precise.

133–134 *by the card*] with precision. The phrase is said to allude to the shipman's card (Cf. *Macb.*, I, iii, 17), on which all the points of the compass were minutely indicated.

134 *equivocation*] casuistry, ambiguity.

135 *this three years*] The First Quarto has *this seauen yeares*. Probably no very definite period is intended. Hamlet apparently means that pedantic preciseness in popular speech is comparatively a new fashion.

136 *picked*] select, refined, smart. Cf. *K. John*, I, i, 193: "My *picked* man of countries."

137 *kibe*] chilblain.

HAM. How long is that since?

FIRST CLO. Cannot you tell that? every fool can tell that: it was that very day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad, and sent into England.

HAM. Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

FIRST CLO. Why, because a' was mad: a' shall recover his wits there; or, if a' do not, 't is no great matter there.

HAM. Why?

FIRST CLO. 'T will not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he. 150

HAM. How came he mad?

FIRST CLO. Very strangely, they say.

HAM. How "strangely"?

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143 *that very day that young Hamlet was born*] This passage, coupled with the clown's remark, "I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years" (lines 155–156, *infra*) seems to prove that Shakespeare intended Hamlet to be a man of thirty, an age which it is not easy to reconcile with the design ascribed to the prince (I, ii, 113, *supra*) of going back to school at Wittenberg. The First Quarto omits these two indications in the present scene of Hamlet's age, but notes that the fool, Yorick, with whom Hamlet says he played as a child, had been dead no more than "a *dozen* years" instead of "three and twenty," which is the accepted text of line 169, *infra* (in all the later editions). On these discrepancies is based the theory that Shakespeare, when first drafting the play, designed Hamlet's age to be under twenty, but increased it by eleven years when revising the piece. Some confusion must be admitted. But it would seem that Hamlet's fertility of thought accords better with ripe manhood than with early youth, and his studious temper might well render academic life congenial to him long after his first youth was past. There is contemporary evidence that students of Danish universities often remained there to the age of thirty.

First Clo. Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

Ham. Upon what ground?

First Clo. Why, here in Denmark: I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

Ham. How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

First Clo. I' faith, if a' be not rotten before a' die — as we have many pocky corses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in — a' will last you some eight year or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year. 163

Ham. Why he more than another?

First Clo. Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that a' will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here 's a skull now: this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

Ham. Whose was it? 170

First Clo. A whoreson mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

Ham. Nay, I know not.

First Clo. A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! a' poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

Ham. This?

First Clo. E'en that. 178

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155 *Upon what ground?*] From what cause.

169 *three and twenty years*] Thus all the early editions save the First Quarto, which reads *a dozen years*. Probably the transcriber of the First Quarto made a careless error. Otherwise we must assume that Shakespeare in revising the piece deliberately added eleven years to Hamlet's age, increasing it from some nineteen years to some thirty.

HAM. Let me see. [*Takes the skull*] Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chop-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

HOR. What's that, my lord?

HAM. Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

HOR. E'en so.

HAM. And smelt so? pah! [*Puts down the skull.*

HOR. E'en so, my lord.

HAM. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

HOR. 'T were to consider too curiously, to consider so.

HAM. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough and likelihood to lead it: as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander re-

179 *Yorick*] The name is apparently formed from the Danish Jörg, *i. e.*, George.

188 *chamber*] Thus the First Quarto and the Folios. The other Quartos read *table*, *i. e.*, dressing-table.

189 *favour*] complexion.

202 *with modesty enough*] without any exaggeration.

turneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

> Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
> O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw! 210

But soft! but soft! aside: here comes the king.

Enter Priests, *&c. in procession: the Corpse of Ophelia,* LAERTES *and* Mourners *following;* KING, QUEEN, *their trains, &c.*

The queen, the courtiers: who is this they follow?
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life: 't was of some estate.
Couch we awhile, and mark. [*Retiring with Horatio.*

LAER. What ceremony else?

HAM. That is Laertes, a very noble youth: mark.

LAER. What ceremony else?

FIRST PRIEST. Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warranty: her death was doubtful; 221

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210 *flaw*] gust of cold wind.

215 *Fordo*] Destroy.
its own] Thus the Sixth Quarto (1676). All the early editions give the older form *it own*. The Third and Fourth Folios read *it's*.

216 *Couch*] Bend down.

221 *warranty*] Thus substantially all the early editions, save the First Folio, which has the less common form *warrantis*. The latter word is found in *Sonnet* cl, 7, and *1 Hen. VI*, I, iii, 13.

And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
Shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her:
Yet here she is allow'd her virgin crants,
Her maiden strewments and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

LAER. Must there no more be done?

FIRST PRIEST. No more be done:
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

LAER. Lay her i' the earth:
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

HAM. What, the fair Ophelia!

QUEEN. [*Scattering flowers*] Sweets to the sweet: farewell!
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
And not have strew'd thy grave.

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226 *crants*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *Rites*. "Crants" means garlands; from the German "kranz." It is rare in English, but is found in lowland Scotch and English provincial dialects.

227 *maiden strewments*] the flowers commonly strewn over a maiden's coffin. Cf. *Cymb.*, IV, ii, 286: "*strewings* fit'st for graves."

227–228 *the bringing home . . . burial*] the bringing to the last home (*i. e.*, the grave) with the ringing of the bell and other ceremonies of burial.

232 *peace-parted*] departed in peace.

LAER. O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth a while,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:
[*Leaps into the grave.*
Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made
To o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

HAM. [*Advancing*] What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. [*Leaps into the grave.*

LAER. The devil take thy soul! [*Grappling with him.*

HAM. Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat;
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,

---

240 *treble woe*] Thus the Quartos. The First Folio reads unintelligibly *terrible woer.*

241 *treble*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *double.*

242 *thy most ingenious sense*] thy reason.

247–248 *old Pelion . . . Olympus*] To these classical types of lofty mountains "Ossa" is added at line 277, *infra.* The three mountains are similarly mentioned together in Ovid's *Metam.*, I, 154–155; in Golding's translation the words run obscurely thus: "Jove's thunderbolt the ayrie tops of high Olympus break, And pressed Pelion violently from under Ossa strake," *i. e.*, (the bolt) hit Pelion, being struck or rebounding off Ossa.

250 *the wandering stars*] the planets.

255 *splenitive*] subject to fits of spleen or anger.

Yet have I in me something dangerous,
Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand.
KING. Pluck them asunder.
QUEEN. Hamlet, Hamlet!
ALL. Gentlemen, —
HOR. Good my lord, be quiet.
[*The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.*
HAM. Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.
QUEEN. O my son, what theme?
HAM. I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?
KING. O, he is mad, Laertes.
QUEEN. For love of God, forbear him.
HAM. 'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do:
Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?
Woo't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?
I'll do 't. Dost thou come here to whine?
To outface me with leaping in her grave?

---

269 *Woo't*] Wilt thou, or wouldst thou.

270 *eisel*] The Second and later Quartos read *Esill*. The Folios read *Esile* (in italics). Eisel is no doubt intended. That word is common in the sense of "vinegar," and here stands for any bitter and nauseous drink, as "crocodile" in the next clause stands for repulsive food. In *Sonnet* cxi, 10, "Potions of *eisel*" (spelt *Eysell* in the Quarto, 1609), stands for strong, repulsive medicine. There may possibly be some reminiscence of the draft of vinegar or gall offered to Christ on the Cross. Cf. *Matthew*, xxvii, 48, where, for "vinegar" of the Authorized Version, Eisele, or aysile, or eysel appears in earlier English translations.

Be buried quick with her, and so will I:
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou.
QUEEN. This is mere madness:
And thus a while the fit will work on him;
Anon, as patient as the female dove
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.
HAM. Hear you, sir;
What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever: but it is no matter;
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day. [*Exit.*
KING. I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.
[*Exit Horatio.*
[*To Laertes*] Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;
We'll put the matter to the present push.
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.
This grave shall have a living monument:

281 *her golden couplets*] The pigeon lays two eggs, and when hatched or "disclosed" the fledglings are covered with a yellow or golden down.

286 *cat . . . day*] a common proverb, meaning that things will take their appointed course, however potent the effort made to divert them.

289 *the present push*] the immediate test or issue.

291 *a living monument*] The expression has here a double sense. The king means the queen to understand "an enduring or lasting memorial." But he is thinking of his plot with Laertes to sacrifice Hamlet's life by way of requital for Ophelia's death.

An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;
Till then, in patience our proceeding be. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — A HALL IN THE CASTLE

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO

HAM. So much for this, sir: now shall you see the other;
You do remember all the circumstance?
HOR. Remember it, my lord!
HAM. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly,
And praised be rashness for it, let us know,
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.
HOR. That is most certain.
HAM. Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
Groped I to find out them; had my desire,

---

6 *mutines*] mutineers. See note on III, iv, 83, *supra.*
bilboes] steel fetters or stocks for the ankles, manufactured at Bilboa in Spain, and employed to confine mutinous sailors at sea.

9 *pall*] grow tasteless or worthless. Thus the Second Quarto and the Folios. Later Quartos read *fall.*

13 *sea-gown*] a sailor's dress, high collared and short sleeved, reaching to the knees.

Finger'd their packet, and in fine withdrew
To mine own room again; making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio, —
O royal knavery! — an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
Importing Denmark's health and England's too,
With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,
That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.
HOR. Is 't possible?
HAM. Here 's the commission: read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear now how I did proceed?
HOR. I beseech you.
HAM. Being thus be-netted round with villanies, —
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play, — I sat me down;

20 *Larded*] Garnished, ornamented. Cf. IV, v, 36, *supra*.

21 *Importing*] Affecting.

22 *With, ho! . . . in my life*] With notes of such alarming consequences if I were suffered to live. "Bugs" often means "bugbears," objects of terror.

23 *on the supervise, no leisure bated*] at the first glance, without any loss of time.

29 *villanies*] The early editions read *villaines*, for which Theobald substituted *villainy* and Capell *villanies*, which improves the metre.

30–31 *Or . . . play*] The Quartos read *Or*, an archaic form of *Ere*, which is the reading of the Folios. The lines mean "Before I could summon my thinking faculties to devise a preliminary plan, my brains (involuntarily) began to act, to take decisive action."

Devised a new commission; wrote it fair:
I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service: wilt thou know
The effect of what I wrote?

HOR. Ay, good my lord.

HAM. An earnest conjuration from the king,
As England was his faithful tributary,
As love between them like the palm might flourish,
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,
And many such-like "As" es of great charge,
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,
Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allow'd.

HOR. How was this seal'd?

HAM. Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,

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33 *statists*] statesmen.

42 *a comma*] a connecting link. Thus the early editions, for which many emendations have been needlessly suggested. "Comma" is implicitly contrasted with "period" or full stop, the punctuation mark of disjunction.

43 "*As* "*es*] A quibble on "as" the conditional particle and "ass" the beast of burden.

of great charge] of great weight or force.

44 *knowing of*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *know of;* "knowing" must be pronounced monosyllabically.

47 *shriving-time*] time for confession and absolution. Cf. *Rich. III*, III, ii, 116: "*shriving* work."

Which was the model of that Danish seal:
Folded the writ up in the form of the other;
Subscribed it; gave 't the impression; placed it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.

HOR. So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.

HAM. Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
They are not near my conscience; their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow:
'T is dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

HOR. Why, what a king is this!

HAM. Does it not, thinks't thee, stand me now upon —
He that hath kill'd my king, and whored my mother;
Popp'd in between the election and my hopes;
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage — is 't not perfect conscience,

50 *model*] copy.
56 *go to 't*] reach their end.
58–59 *their defeat . . . grow*] their ruin is a fruit of their intermeddling or intrusion.
61 *pass*] thrust.
62 *opposites*] foes, opponents, hostile forces.
63 *Does it not . . . now upon*] Is it not my imperative business, does it not seem to thee — For *thinks't thee* the Folios read *think'st thee*, and the Quartos *thinke thee*. "Think" in the sense of "seem" is a different word from "think" in the ordinary sense of "perceive."
66 *angle*] line; often use of fishing-line.

To quit him with this arm? and is 't not to be damn'd,
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

HOR. It must be shortly known to him from England
What is the issue of the business there.

HAM. It will be short: the interim is mine;
And a man's life's no more than to say "One."
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For, by the image of my cause, I see
The portraiture of his: I'll court his favours:
But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a towering passion.

HOR. Peace! who comes here?

Enter OSRIC

OSR. Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

HAM. I humbly thank you, sir. Dost know this water-fly?

68–80 *To quit . . . here?*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos omit the passage.
68 *quit him*] requite him, punish him, pay him out.
69–70 *come In further evil*] proceed further in villany.
73 *the interim is mine*] I'll put the interval to my own advantage (for the crisis is at hand).
77–78 *For, by the image . . . of his*] Laertes, like Hamlet, has lost both a father and Ophelia.
78 *court*] Rowe's emendation of the Folio reading *count*.
79 *bravery*] bravado, ostentation.
83 *water-fly*] This insect dances aimlessly over the surface of the water, and is therefore emblematic of a busy trifler.

HOR. No, my good lord.

HAM. Thy state is the more gracious, for 't is a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile: let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess: 't is a chough, but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt. 89

OSR. Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

HAM. I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his right use; 't is for the head.

OSR. I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

HAM. No, believe me, 't is very cold; the wind is northerly.

OSR. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

HAM. But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot, or my complexion — 99

OSR. Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, as 't were, — I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head: sir, this is the matter —

HAM. I beseech you, remember —

[*Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.*

88 *king's mess*] king's private table.
chough] Some interpret it a jackdaw. But the word may be a spelling of "chuff," a term often applied to a rich boor.

98–99 *or my complexion*] Thus substantially the Second and later Quartos. Hamlet apparently was about to end his sentence with some such words as "deceives me." The Folios quite satisfactorily read "for my complexion."

104 *remember*] The full conventional phrase is "remember thy courtesy," which meant in this connection "keep your hat on." Cf. *L.L.L.*, V, i, 84–85, and note.

Osr. Nay, good my lord; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing: indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see. 111

Ham. Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you; though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article, and his infusion

105 *for mine ease*] apparently an affected colloquialism of courtesy; a conventional justification for standing bareheaded.

106–141 *Sir, here is newly come . . . unfellowed*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios make Osric substitute for these six-and-thirty lines the fourteen words *Sir, you are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is at his weapon.*

107 *absolute*] consummate, perfect.
excellent differences] distinctive excellences.

109 *feelingly*] with sympathetic perception.
the card or calendar of gentry] the true pattern or guide of gentility.

110–111 *the continent . . . see*] the map or receptacle of every accomplishment that a gentleman would look for.

112 *his definement . . . in you*] his description loses nothing at your hands.

113 *to divide him inventorially*] to distinguish all his qualities in the manner of a schedule or inventory.

114 *yet but yaw*] Thus the Second Quarto. The other Quartos read *yet but raw*. "Yaw" is a nautical word, meaning stagger, move unsteadily. The passage means that the arithmetical power which is needed to enumerate Laertes' excellences would stagger, or totter, in face of their brilliant variety, and quick vivacity. Hamlet is parodying Osric's euphuistic extravagances.

116 *a soul of great article*] a soul of large comprehension, of large volume.

of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror, and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.

OSR. Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

HAM. The concernancy, sir? why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

OSR. Sir?

HOR. Is 't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do 't, sir, really.

HAM. What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

OSR. Of Laertes?

HOR. His purse is empty already; all 's golden words are spent.

HAM. Of him, sir.

OSR. I know you are not ignorant —

HAM. I would you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?

OSR. You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is —

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117 *infusion . . . dearth*] endowments of such dearness or high value.

118–119 *his semblable . . . nothing more*] his likeness can only be found in his mirror; and nothing save his own shadow could keep pace with him (none but himself can be his parallel).

121 *concernancy*] pertinence.

124–125 *Is 't not possible . . . really*] Is it not possible to make oneself intelligible in another and more ordinary manner of speech? You really could manage to do it if you tried. Cf. Horatio's next speech: "All 's golden words are spent."

126 *What imports the nomination*] What is the name of.

134 *approve me*] commend me, be to my credit.

HAM. I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but, to know a man well, were to know himself.

OSR. I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he 's unfellowed.

HAM. What 's his weapon?

OSR. Rapier and dagger.

HAM. That 's two of his weapons: but, well.

OSR. The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hanger, and so: three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

137–139 *I dare not . . . know himself*] Hamlet dare not confess full knowledge of Laertes' excellences, lest he should seem to claim for himself equal worth; a man can only know of another that which he knows of himself.

140–141 *in the imputation . . . by them*] but according to the reputation assigned him by people in general, he is unequalled in the praise bestowed on him as a swordsman.

146 *imponed*] staked. Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *impaund*, which Osric may have affectedly pronounced like "imponed." See line 160, *infra*.

147–148 *assigns, as . . . hanger*] appendages, appurtenances, such as the strap which attaches the sword to the girdle. Thus the Quartos. For *hanger* the Folios read *hangers*. There were usually more sword-straps than one. See lines 154, 157, *infra*.

148 *the carriages*] apparently the "hangers" or "swordstraps." Cf. line 154, *infra*.

149–150 *dear to . . . hilts*] pleasing to the taste, harmonising well with the ornament of the hilts.

150 *liberal conceit*] handsome, elaborate design. Cf. line 158, *infra*, *liberal-conceited*.

HAM. What call you the carriages?

HOR. I knew you must be edified by the margent ere you had done.

OSR. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

HAM. The phrase would be more germane to the matter if we could carry a cannon by our sides: I would it might be hangers till then. But, on: six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages; that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this "imponed," as you call it? 160

OSR. The king, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits: he hath laid on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAM. How if I answer "no"?

152–153 *I knew . . . done*] Thus the Quartos. The words are omitted from the Folios.

152 *edified by the margent*] instructed by the marginal notes or commentary.

155 *germane*] appropriate.

161–163 *The king, sir . . . twelve for nine*] According to the First Quarto (1603), the wager is that Laertes "in twelve venies," *i. e.*, bouts, does "not get three oddes of" Hamlet. Osric does not express himself quite clearly. In the first place the king penalises Laertes by wagering that in a dozen bouts or passes his hits will not exceed Hamlet's hits by three. In order to win the wager, Laertes therefore must win eight out of the twelve bouts. He will lose the wager if Hamlet make five hits to his seven. Cf. lines 203 and 253–255, *infra*. "Twelve for nine" (or four to three) forms the terms of a bet laid by the king against Laertes' chances of victory; they are independent of the number of passes or hits in the encounter.

165 *vouchsafe the answer*] accept the challenge.

OSR. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

HAM. Sir, I will walk here in the hall: if it please his majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me; let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him an I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSR. Shall I redeliver you e'en so?

HAM. To this effect, sir, after what flourish your nature will.

OSR. I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAM. Yours, yours. [*Exit Osric*] He does well to commend it himself; there are no tongues else for 's turn.

HOR. This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head. 181

HAM. He did comply with his dug before he sucked it. Thus has he — and many more of the same breed that I know the drossy age dotes on — only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through

170 *breathing time*] time for recreation or exercise.

180–181 *This lapwing . . . head*] It was a common belief that the lapwing was in such a hurry to be hatched that it ran about at birth with the shell on its head. Horatio means that Osric is still in his first infancy. The lapwing was also identified with insincerity.

182 *comply with*] exchange compliments, stand upon ceremony with. Cf. II, ii, 368, *supra*.

183 *many more of the same breed*] Thus the Quartos. For *many* the First Folio reads *mine*, the other Folios *nine*. All the Folios read *beavy* for *breed*.

185 *outward . . . encounter*] exterior politeness of address.

186 *yesty collection*] frothy collection of empty phrases.

the most fond and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.

Enter a Lord

LORD. My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend him in the hall: he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

HAM. I am constant to my purposes; they follow the king's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

LORD. The king and queen and all are coming down.

HAM. In happy time.

LORD. The queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

HAM. She well instructs me. [*Exit Lord.* 200

HOR. You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAM. I do not think so; since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win at the

187 *fond and winnowed*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read, unintelligibly, *prophane and trennowed* (or *trennowned*); "fond" means foolish or affected; "winnowed," sifted, refined. For *fond, profound* has been suggested. As it stands the passage means that the frothy kind of prattle of Osric and his like satisfies their ordinary needs and passes muster in the judgment both of the thoughtless and of men of refined wit. Such prattlers speciously deceive most people. But if you put them to any genuine test, they are burst bubbles.

197 *In happy time*] Like the French "à la bonne heure," in good time, betimes, early.

203 *win at the odds*] a reference to the handicap of three points by which the king has penalised Laertes. See note on lines 161–163, *supra*. Cf. *Rich. II*, I, i, 62–63: "I would allow him *odds*, and meet him."

odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all 's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

HOR. Nay, good my lord, —

HAM. It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman.

HOR. If your mind dislike any thing, obey it. I will forestal their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

HAM. Not a whit; we defy augury: there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 't is not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all; since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be.

Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, *and* Lords, OSRIC *and other* Attendants *with foils and gauntlets; a table and flagons of wine on it*

KING. Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.

[*The King puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.*

HAM. Give me your pardon, sir: I 've done you wrong;
But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.
This presence knows,
And you must needs have heard, how I am punish 'd

207–208 *gain-giving*] misgiving.

211 *defy*] disclaim, renounce.

214–215 *since no man . . . leaves, what*] Thus substantially the Folios, though with somewhat different punctuation. The early Quartos read *since no man of ought he leaves, knowes what.* The present text seems to mean "since no man has a really secure hold of what he must leave behind him at death, why should he complain of taking leave of it early."

220 *This presence*] This audience, great assembly.

With sore distraction. What I have done,
That might your nature, honour and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was 't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet:
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he 's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness: if 't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in this audience,
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother.

LAER. I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge: but in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconcilement,
Till by some elder masters of known honour
I have a voice and precedent of peace,
To keep my name ungored. But till that time
I do receive your offer'd love like love
And will not wrong it.

HAM. I embrace it freely,

223 *exception*] disapproval. Cf. *All's Well*, I, ii, 40: "*Exception* bid him speak."

236 *brother*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios absurdly read *Mother*.

240 *Till . . . honour*] Till some experts in the accepted code of honour give me an opinion and indicate a precedent justifying peace, which shall preserve my good name from injury.

And will this brother's wager frankly play.
Give us the foils. Come on.
LAER. Come, one for me.
HAM. I 'll be your foil, Laertes: in mine ignorance
Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.
LAER. You mock me, sir.
HAM. No, by this hand.
KING. Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?
HAM. Very well, my lord;
Your grace has laid the odds o' the weaker side.
KING. I do not fear it; I have seen you both:
But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds.
LAER. This is too heavy; let me see another.
HAM. This likes me well. These foils have all a length? [*They prepare to play.*
OSR. Ay, my good lord.
KING. Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.

247 *foil*] set off; a quibble.
248 *darkest*] Thus all the editions save the second and later Folios, which read *brightest*.
249 *Stick fiery off*] Stand out in bright relief.
253 *Your grace . . . odds o' the weaker side*] The king has laid a bet twelve to nine (or four to three) against Laertes and in Hamlet's favour. Cf. line 163 *seq.*, *supra*.
255 *But since . . . odds*] The word "odds" is used here in the sense of "handicap" and not in that of "a betting advantage" as in line 253, *supra*. The king means that since Laertes has improved as a fencer, it is right to handicap him. Cf. lines 161–163, *supra*.
259 *stoups*] large drinking-cups or flagons. Cf. V, i, 67, *supra*.

If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an union shall he throw,
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
"Now the king drinks to Hamlet." Come, begin;
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

HAM. Come on, sir.

LAER. Come, my lord. [*They play.*

HAM. One.

LAER. No.

HAM. Judgement.

OSR. A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAER. Well; again.

KING. Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine;

261 *quit . . . exchange*] requite Laertes or pay him home in the encounter of the third bout.

264 *union*] a large pearl of exceptional quality; a common usage. Thus the Folios. The Second Quarto has *Vnice*, which later Quartos translate into *Onyx*. Cf. line 318, *infra*.

267 *kettle*] kettledrum.

274 *this pearl is thine*] The king, under pretence of dropping the pearl or union (line 264, *supra*) into the cup, really drops poison. This Hamlet suspects afterwards. Cf. line 318, *infra*, "is thy union here?"

Here's to thy health. [*Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.*
Give him the cup.

HAM. I'll play this bout first; set it by a while.
Come. [*They play*] Another hit; what say you?

LAER. A touch, a touch, I do confess.

KING. Our son shall win.

QUEEN. He's fat and scant of breath.
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows: 280
The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

HAM. Good madam!

KING. Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN. I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

KING. [*Aside*] It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.

HAM. I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by.

QUEEN. Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAER. My lord, I'll hit him now.

KING. I do not think 't.

LAER. [*Aside*] And yet it is almost against my conscience.

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278 *A touch, a touch*] Something less than a "hit." Thus the Folios. The words are omitted by the Quartos.

279 *He 's fat . . . breath*] Thus all the early editions. Some modern editors substitute *faint* or *hot* for *fat*. But Hamlet's sedentary student life might easily tend to corpulence. A stage tradition makes these words apply to Richard Burbage, the creator of the part of Hamlet. In one form of an elegy on Burbage, the expression "scant of breath" is applied to him in his rendering of the rôle of "young" Hamlet.

280 *napkin*] handkerchief.

282 *Good madam!*] The note of exclamation is Dyce's needless interpolation. Hamlet is merely courteously acknowledging the queen's toast. His words come to nothing more than "Thank you, madam."

HAM. Come, for the third, Laertes: you but dally;
I pray you, pass with your best violence; 290
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.
LAER. Say you so? come on. [*They play.*
OSR. Nothing, neither way.
LAER. Have at you now!
[*Laertes wounds Hamlet; then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*
KING. Part them; they are incensed.
HAM. Nay, come, again. [*The Queen falls.*
OSR. Look to the queen there, ho!
HOR. They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord?
OSR. How is't, Laertes?
LAER. Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric; I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.
HAM. How does the queen?
KING. She swounds to see them bleed.
QUEEN. No, no, the drink, the drink, — O my dear Hamlet, — 301
The drink, the drink! I am poison'd. [*Dies.*

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290 *pass*] make the thrust.

291 *make a wanton of me*] treat me like a spoilt child.

294 (stage direction) *Laertes . . . Laertes*] This is Rowe's emendation. In the First Quarto the stage direction runs: *They catch one anothers Rapiers, and both are wounded, Laertes falles downe, the Queene falles downe and dies.* The other Quartos omit all stage direction here. The Folios merely read *In scuffling they change Rapiers.*

298 *as a woodcock . . . springe*] See note on I, iii, 115, *supra*: "*springes* (*i. e.*, traps) to catch *woodcocks*." Woodcocks were proverbially foolish birds.

HAM. O villany! Ho! let the door be lock'd:
Treachery! seek it out. [*Laertes falls.*
LAER. It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain;
No medicine in the world can do thee good,
In thee there is not half an hour of life;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenom'd: the foul practice
Hath turn'd itself on me; lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again: thy mother's poison'd:
I can no more: the king, the king 's to blame.
HAM. The point envenom'd too!
Then, venom, to thy work. [*Stabs the King.*
ALL. Treason! treason!
KING. O, yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt.
HAM. Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,
Drink off this potion: is thy union here?
Follow my mother. [*King dies.*
LAER. He is justly served;
It is a poison temper'd by himself.
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet:
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me! [*Dies.*
HAM. Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,

309 *Unbated*] Unblunted, with the button off. Cf. IV, vii, 138, *supra*: "sword *unbated*."

318 *thy union*] the pearl mentioned at line 264, *supra*. Thus the First Quarto and the Folios. The other Quartos read *the Onyx*.

320 *temper'd*] mixed.

That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time — as this fell sergeant, death,
Is strict in his arrest — O, I could tell you —
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.
HOR. Never believe it:
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:
Here 's yet some liquor left.
HAM. As thou'rt a man,
Give me the cup: let go; by heaven, I 'll have 't.
O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. [*March afar off, and shot within.*
What warlike noise is this?
OSR. Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,
To the ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.

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327 *mutes*] dumb performers in a play. Cf. stage direction for the *Dumb Show*, III, ii, 130, *supra:* "The poisoner, with some two or three *mutes*, comes in again."

328 *fell sergeant, death*] The bailiff or sheriff's officer was often called a "sergeant." For the figure cf. *Sonnet* lxxiv, 1–2: "when that *fell arrest Without all bail* shall carry me away."

336 *O good Horatio*] Thus the Folios. The Second and later Folios read *O god Horatio.*

339 *felicity*] the joys of heaven.

HAM. O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:
I cannot live to hear the news from England;
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice;
So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,
Which have solicited. The rest is silence. [*Dies.*
HOR. Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest! [*March within.*
Why does the drum come hither?

Enter FORTINBRAS, *and the* English Ambassadors, *with drum, colours, and* Attendants

FORT. Where is this sight?
HOR. What is it you would see?
If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.
FORT. This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death,
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,

345 *o'er-crows*] overcomes, like the victorious cock in a cock fight.

349–350 *the occurrents . . . solicited*] the incidents, greater and smaller, which have promoted (the situation). Apparently the sentence is interrupted.

356 *This quarry*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read, less satisfactorily, *His quarry*. The phrase means, this heap of dead (game) proclaims or plainly announces an indiscriminate slaughter. "Cry havoc" (cf. *Jul. Caes.*, III, i, 274) means "give order for no quarter." But "cry on havoc" means "calls out or proclaims that havoc is in progress," as in *Othello*, V, i, 48: "whose noise is this that *cries on* (*i. e.*, calls out or proclaims) murder?"

357 *toward*] at hand, imminent. Cf. *As you like it*, V, iv, 35: "another flood *toward*."

eternal] used like "infernal." Cf. I, v, 21, *supra*.

That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck?
FIRST AMB. The sight is dismal;
And our affairs from England come too late:
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,
To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead:
Where should we have our thanks?
HOR. Not from his mouth
Had it the ability of life to thank you:
He never gave commandment for their death.
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view;
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about: so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads: all this can I
Truly deliver.

364 *from his mouth*] from the king's mouth.
367 *so jump upon . . . question*] so close, prompt, upon this theme of tragedy.
373 *carnal*] incestuous.
375 *put on . . . forced cause*] instigated by trickery and stratagem that circumstances compelled. Cf. line 29 *seq.*, *supra*, where Hamlet explains his plot against the lives of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. For *forced cause*, the Folio reading, the Quartos give *for no cause*.
376 *in this upshot*] in this conclusion of the tragedy.

FORT. Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune:
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.
HOR. Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more:
But let this same be presently perform'd,
Even while men's minds are wild; lest more mischance
On plots and errors happen.
FORT. Let four captains
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royally: and, for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him.
Take up the bodies: such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[*A dead march. Exeunt, bearing off the bodies: after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.*

381 *rights of memory*] rights founded on remembered tradition.

384 *from his mouth . . . more*] from Hamlet's mouth whose vote or suffrage will lead others to second it. The reference is to Hamlet's dying words of Fortinbras, at line 348, *supra:* "he has my dying voice."

387 *On plots*] On the top of plots.

389 *put on*] put to the test.

390 *for his passage*] as for his passing away, his dying.

Brentano